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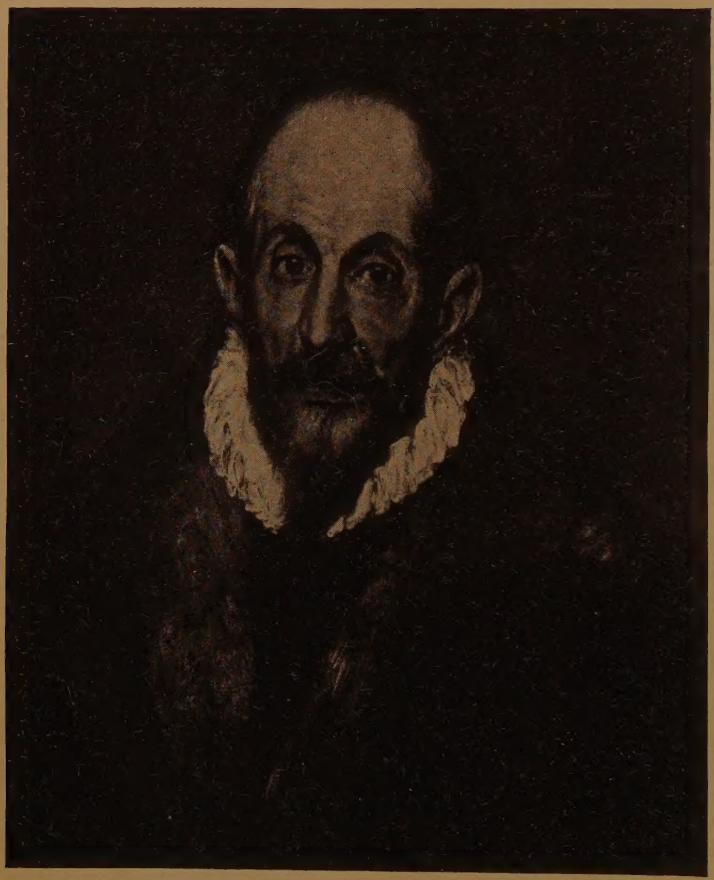

El Greco: Self-portrait
1604

Bird of God

THE ROMANCE OF
EL GRECO

By

Virginia Hersch

Harper & Brothers Publishers
NEW YORK AND LONDON
1929

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TO

LEE HERSCH

WITHOUT WHOM THIS STORY

WOULD HAVE REMAINED

UNSEEN, UNTOLD

Foreword

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the great Renaissance was drawing toward its close, but a new genius, Domenicos Theotocopoulos, to be known as El Greco, was born. His youth gathered and expressed Byzantine and Renaissance art. His maturity founded our modern school. Many painters, from Velasquez on, have recognized him as their master. Often the recognition seems a boast, but the fact remains that progressive art always reaches toward him. He is more than the source of Cézanne and Picasso. He is, in Cossio's phrase, "the prophet of every rebirth of individualism."

During three centuries of popular neglect, records and valuable works were lost, and his life became a myth, until the loving and independent research of Cossio, Borja de San Román, and Willumsen revealed its outline, as strange and eternally modern as his pictures demand. So much still remains unknown that, to give body to El Greco's spirit, and to give a vital picture of the man, not only must the life be worked into the epoch, but broad gaps in evidence must be spanned with inference and interpretation.

In order to intensify and concentrate the scene, I found it necessary to take slight liberties with decorative facts, but held to authority in all that is essential.

In any case, the use of the novel form would make this biography to some extent an imaginative romance of the creative life. Therefore, because the subject is important and confused, and the study as authentic as possible, I shall follow the text with "Notes for Those Who Care" to subtract inference from record, and rebuild. V. H.

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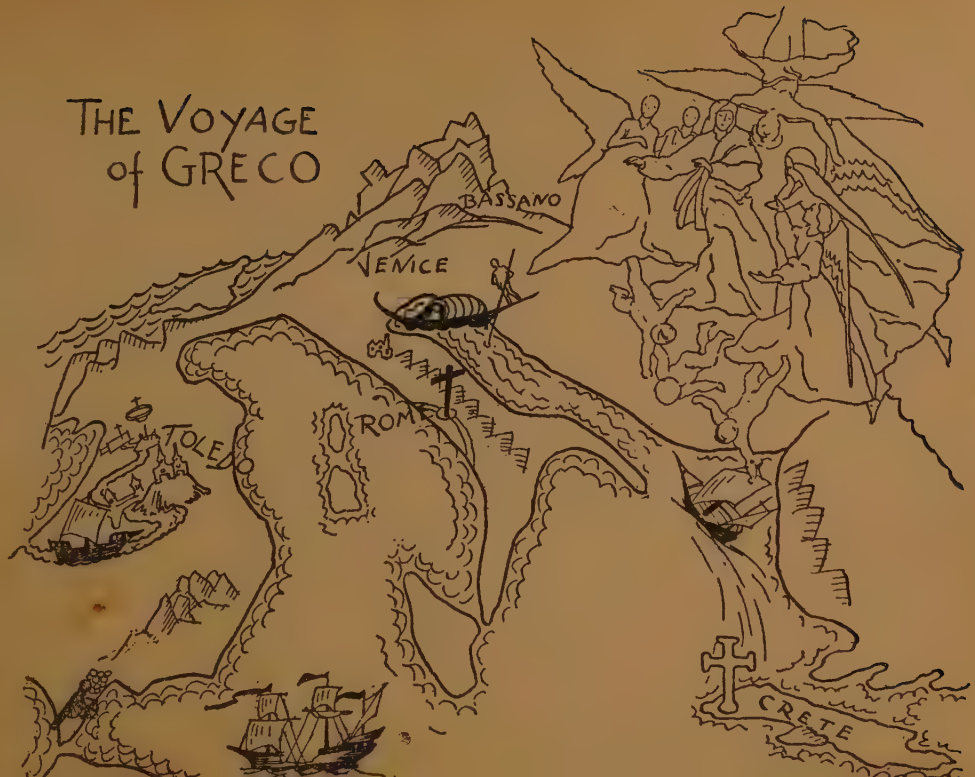

THE VOYAGE
of GRECO
BASSANO
VENICE
ROME
TOLEDO
CRETE

I. CRETE (about 1560)

IT WAS sweet within the old Greek monastery, the world beyond the sea unknown, even the island Crete, beyond the walls, remembered only at vesper time when church bells rang in harmony from one hill-top to another, rousing birds to circle darkly. Then fires were lighted to the saints. At that hour the boy, Domenicos, touched his head in prayer against the earth and felt the mingling of the soil with his own blood. Son of this island in the center of the central sea, a land that had been taken since the ancient times by each most triumphant nation at the apex of its power, lost with the break of power, to be conquered again, and always despised by the conqueror, Crete was like a human mother to the lad, and her story seemed his own. He remembered the rhythmic scene that the prior's words had shown him, a common tale of the Venetian rule with constant revolutions crushed, slaughter of leaders, and, to perpetuate the fear of punishment, burning of fields, and the edict that they might not be sowed again. The holy father had said that, fifteen years before, while he watched the flames of rebellion die, wondering when God would lift His anger from sorry Crete, this massacre of the people, this despoliation of the land, he had seen a wounded creature drag towards him up the mountain-side—

Domenicos' mother, with her long veil catching in the brush, as she ran, and fell, and pulled herself up to run and fall again like a dying bird, with him, an infant in her arms. There had been nothing the monks could do but to rest and confess her before she died, and her last speaking was to whisper: "Theotocopoulos —the end of the name—Let him be of God, rather than of the Greeks, that he may learn humbly to accept defeat—escape the curse and the oppression. Domenicos, of God . . ." That was all.

While his forehead touched the land and he felt her resignation, he realized with great joy that the sky behind him had turned golden as an icon's base, and his soul yearned towards his Maker. After benediction, he loved to walk with a gentle brother, speaking of the lives of saints, and marvelling on the meaning of his name, *Theotocopoulos*, the bird begot of God, symbolic of the Holy Ghost. Calm, black nights led to bright mornings when it was happiness to go into the workroom. Then, monks outside intoned their prayers, and novices turned the soil to make the sheltered garden bloom deliciously; but inside the room of cold, green stone he sat at the long table and painted the blessed saints carefully and peacefully, according to the rules St. Luke laid down, rules that were taught in Byzantium until Byzantium fell to the Turks and the canons were preserved in Crete alone. Then, that tradition might not be altered and memory lost, only priests and monks were privi-

leged to paint the sacred scenes, which, moreover, only men of God were pure enough to do.

He was one of a line of boys who bent over small icons, each doing his own part. Little Galba prepared the block of wood; Emmanuel drew the figures in; Alypios did the draperies; and he, Domenicos, the cleverest of all, painted the loved faces; while the learned brothers walked back and forth and monotonously said: "Remember light approaches, dark recedes. Remember the body is nine times the head without the hair, the hair one nose-length beyond. Remember the features as our patron Luke first taught and many generations have remembered." It was sweet and calm to work in unison, remembering.

But one day, after the bell at the monastery gate had rung, Domenicos heard a clear voice play around the steady murmur of the monk, and heard light footsteps come unevenly over the uneven floor. Suddenly the Venetian lady stood before him. Until then he had seen no women but strong peasants who came with offerings, their veils flung carelessly across broad heads, their bare arms and breasts varnished by the blackening sun, their bodies, and their laughter, and their worship simple, strong. But now the Venetian lady stood and smiled with all the easy pride of conscious beauty and superior race. He saw her tall hair woven with bright ribbons, saw her deep white chest edged with rich lace. Strands of pearls played on her as she walked between the benches. She came behind him. He heard her pause, and felt her small hand like a bird caught in his

hair, felt it travel down beneath his chin to turn his face to her.

"It is very pretty," her finger said, touching his holy icon, while her eyes said "very pretty" to his face.

Then there came the clamour of a high male voice, "Fioretta! Fioretta!" and a dapper little man in tight-fitting armour clattered in. "How can you stay among these filthy Greeks?" he cried; and to her murmured answer, "But they are the lowest of the low. . . . Ridiculous. . . . It's their own fault if they are poor. Let them stop rebelling and they'll get some privileges. But what can we do with such a stubborn herd? . . . But, Fioretta, these are the very ones who break into our churches, cut down the statues of the saints, and steal the sacred vessels. Why, nonsense! It's not from need, but hate. Come away from the nasty animals. Fioretta, come!"

She, with one hand forgotten on the sensitive boy's face, laid the other on the man's peevish lips, and walked away, letting her palm, and then her fingers, trail from under the small chin.

After the lay brother had left an icon in her hand, Domenicos saw her turn once only, saw her long white bodice, and heard the one word "Venice," spoken in a voice that glorified the tyrant's name.

He had been unable to continue painting the eyes of the Madonna.

That evening the golden sky was shot with long white clouds. As he walked swiftly back and forth across the garden, startled birds cried out and swung

over the high wall; and when the bells began to ring, there rose before him images of towers reared in hatred, one before the other, cleft by the great schism when, centuries ago, the Latin Church turned from the Eastern, the Orthodox, the Apostolic Church, founded on the pure teachings of eye-witnesses. Now the bells of the Roman Church sang "Venice" with the careless ecstasy of conquerors, while the poor, thin bells of Grecian worshippers wept with the rancour of starved priests forced to sell a holy icon to a jewelled hand. The rising mist was breath of the defeated gods, and the Byzantine Madonna stood among them, her heart pierced with grief. The Cretan blood within the boy turned proud. It rose against repression, while the Venetian lady seemed to stand within the tall Roman tower, and her voice was in its bell.

He was hot and cold all night and in short intervals of sleep dreamed of a long white woman laughing over her shoulder, while carelessly she crushed a wounded bird in her hand—a bird that fluttered and swelled with breath, and beat with its will to live.

Next day, when Domenicos returned to paint the eyes of the Madonna, the forms seemed swollen as wet eyes of mist, and tight as the hard edge of a voice, and his hand became unsteady. The passing brother paused and said, "Remember the features of the saints"; and returning, said: "It must be done even as St. Luke, the evangelist, painted the Hodîgîtria Madonna, that the iconoclasts condemned to fire, but which was rescued by two monks who were then ship-

wrecked on the isle of Bari, where the painting yet remains to teach us." But the boy could not discipline his hand, so that the brother, passing yet again, had cried: "Domenicos Theotocopoulos, you are possessed of dæmons! It is not the Madonna that you paint!"

Anger within the peaceful room, surging fury of centuries, the eternal hatred of false peace disturbed, screamed with the voices of crazed monks, who rushed around him crying that it was the everlasting curse of Crete to be a stubborn lot; their own Apostle Paul had set into the Holy Script, in words of an earlier prophet still, that the Cretans were always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies, to be rebuked sharply, and now Domenicos among them made the saying true, son of a worthless people, deserving of their fate.

With icy lips the adolescent stood before the prior and made confession, pale frightened face to pale reproving face; and when the prior had murmured the gentle words, "Let our Lord absolve thee": the anger of the monks fell back like ebb tide. But the calmness of the father was stern. He told how Christ had struggled in the desert forty days with sin. He said: "My son, who grew up in the image of St. Luke; my son, who is of God more than of the Greeks—your time of trial is here. Humiliate yourself and learn whether you are to be a man of God or whether you must leave this monastery which has been your only home. Know yourself, for will is not enough. There must be a divine call and prayers before you may be

consecrated by the laying-on of hands. Know, too, that there is no greater privilege on earth than to be allowed to transmit the memory of the saints and angels; but the sacrament, once given, leaves an ineffable mark upon the soul, and the vow, once taken, never may be broken, for there is no greater misery, no blacker sin, than to learn too late that there was no call."

Days Domenicos fasted, prayed, and beat himself until he cried out in agony and saw the frightened birds rise and rush away. Days he pressed his body against the cold walls of the cell and beat his fists against the stone. Ah, merciful God, then must he go? But outside the monastery he would not be allowed to paint the lives of saints; and yet he could not stay to picture faces placid in defeat while the conflict of the world rang in his ears, and he saw as breaking waves the line his mother made in her cruel progress up the hill with death already in her body and flames behind. Dear Mother of Christ, can you be calm to this? or is there triumph somewhere? One might willingly destroy his soul to stay and paint, but it was no longer possible to trace the smooth lines St. Luke taught.

He lashed himself in horror at himself until he fell limp beneath the window of his cell. There was like a great wind above him, and he thought that it might be an answer from the sky. He heard many feet approaching, heard voices singing, and lay tense. They came. They came. He heard a voice intone, heard others chant, and sobbed because he recognized a

funeral procession, the priest's voice speaking and the answering hymns, the broken chime of mourners, and the gentle song that symbolized the answer of the dead: "Peace, I have found peace within the Lord." The boy rolled on the ground and writhed in envy of the dead.

"Am I only sixteen," he sighed, "with life spread far ahead of me?"

Numbly his fingers dug into the ground and moved unconsciously along the earthen floor, while thoughts seemed to come from the outside, to play about his skin, and sink towards his mind. "Perhaps the work of God." He saw that he had drawn a quivering line. "Beauty. Strong." He waited, gazing at his line. "Theotocopoulos, the bird of God. Spirit rather than rule or canon. Free." Then all thought broke out of his brain to flow into his fingers in a flood of overwhelming joy. All words, all sounds fell back from him, and there was only line leading to another line, and growing into figures, into faces; and he raised himself on to his hands and saw that it was beautiful which he had done, although the body was more than nine times the head without the hair, and the features were no features Luke had seen; and yet it looked so beautiful he wrote his name in lovely letters by it, and pressed his lips against the face. His shaven forehead lay upon the ground and the long hair of back and sides fell like soft hands moving on his chin.

At last he stood before the holy father and told him he would have to go, for his fingers were too

nervous, even if his will and heart would consent, ever to follow rules again. But while he spoke with contrite voice, the memory of his drawing glittered in his eyes, and the hated name of Venice rang in his ears. Yes, he remembered then that he had heard the dapper man complain: "These crude, awkward things, Fioretta, how can you want them when you know the free beauty of Venetian art?" before she sang out, "Venice."

The father spoke kindly: "Domenicos, who I had hoped would be a man of God."

"But the bird, Theotocopoulos, must fly."

The father answered: "Go then, and remember as in the Holy Script, when *the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, she returned unto the ark; then he put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her unto him into the ark,* and that even so, you always may return."

The boy's heart cried out that after other days *he sent forth the dove which returned not again unto him any more,* but he did not speak the lines for fear of an imperfection of his memory, but rather answered: "I shall not forget your teaching, and my art shall place the name of Crete over the high altars of the world, and when I paint the Apostle Paul, his hand will hold the scroll which consecrated the Church of Crete."

"My son," the prior cried, "surely you do not forget that outside the Holy Orders you have no authority to paint the lives of saints."

"Then I must go," the young voice fainted, "away from Crete and Orthodox. . . ."

"Humility, humility," the monk intoned. "Fear God and tremble. What true witness was the saying of St. Paul. . . ."

But the lad's dream was already too high for him to care as he strode from the protected garden onto the open land, for the first time to hear vespers in an unknown place.

He walked for three days over Crete, towards Candia, the capital, the port, while the earth burned through his shoes and scorched his feet, and his eyes became as river-beds into which the two streams of life —the Greek and the Venetian—flowed and laked the heritage of defeat, the dream of conquering.

Through the district of Madaras, he saw the peasants, Spakhiotes, belt their flowing white shirts at the waist, sling their quivers of two hundred arrows on their backs, long bows over their shoulders, rapiers at their sides, and with their tall, dark women, dance through flaming noon. Peasants, breathing deeply, kicked and circled, leapt long leaps that shot their shadows swiftly through the ground, to rise and fling out on its surface as their booted feet descended, stamped, swung, kicked, and leapt up higher. Each time they sprang higher into a sun whose blaze and whose cool shattered yellow lights and blue darkness

down long hair and rippling clothes. Midday slashed their tense, strained faces, but their bodies leapt. They sang, while the ancients beat the rhythm, gloating in the spectacle of strength: powerful, leaping forms of sweethearts; lithe young people of a long-lived race; Cretans for untold generations, pure of blood and pure of lip, Spakhiotes who drink only milk and can never be confused with any conqueror.

Domenicos turned from the boastful dance of the vanquished, for a jewelled index-finger pointed on. The laughter of her long white throat, under its pearls and laces, had never needed to assert power or beauty. It was Venice, like the ease of birds above him, like the sure acrostics that their shadows made upon the ground.

He crossed the glimmering march of peasants under sheaths of icy grain, and walked on bleeding feet, past women whose feet were redder than his own, theirs red from treading wine that would bring folly to the conqueror. When one, with breasts and arms bare and blackened by the sun, offered him a white bowl of foaming milk, she smiled into his ardent face with pity for its eagerness, and he smiled back with pitying affection for his people, so humble in defeat, so patient. He, Domenicos, would not accept defeat. He had seen praise in Venetian eyes, and would go to the source of her laughter.

Burning clods of vineyards scorched his feet. Sun melted his straining muscles. Shadows of cities caressed him. Each noon, exhausted, he reeled into a

church to pray for strength, but fell asleep on the cool stone, and awakening, found small coins in his limp hat. That gave him food and courage to go on until his feet began to love their pain. It was the soil of Crete entering him. He would receive and lead it to triumph. Crete forced him to go, but it would go with him, its arrogance, its suffering, but not its yieldingness. He would not be satisfied until he had become one of the great, not merely a member of a conquering race, but one with "great" applied to his own name. Domenicos Theotocopoulos, with lace, laughter, and jewels; and they would call his painting beautiful, now and even long after his death, long after Venice. . . . He knew that there would be pain and discouragement, but he would be repaid by fame. His mind stopped before the young artist's dream of utter splendour, which he could not foresee in detail because, he thought, it would be greater than ever had been known. He laughed. To begin at the beginning, he was walking towards the sea on which a ship would leave a long white line, like her finger, or her string of pearls.

The third time that the shadows coiled at noon and stretched out towards night, he noticed that the birds no longer sang, for the birds of the mountains and the plain had given place to the broad-winged white birds of the sea and his road dropped straight to Candia. He walked through ancient ruins, crossed many clear, cool streams, saw the mountains part to receive the city set in high, protecting walls. He swung down

into it, while many bells of rival churches rang. He wove among the perfumed crowd: Greek merchants and Jews in long black robes; Mussulmans whose high dark heads wore the turban or the fez; Franciscan friars in dark brown; Dominicans in white; bearded Greek priests with emaciated faces, burning eyes, and flowing beards; fat Roman priests on asses; red-belted Grecian peasants; soldiers in uniform; negroes; Spakhiotes with their arrows rattling; women at the fountains filling huge earthen jars, coming from the fountains with the jars on their heads, and the cold slap of fresh water as they walked; old men; small boys crying, "Candy for sale": for sale, sweet, sticky candy; bright rugs; glassy jewellery; men plodding on tired feet, men leading tiny burros with enormous, heaping baskets flopping at their sides; then the elegant Italians, the Venetians tightly clad, wiry and small, with their beautifully-gowned ladies full of laughing wine.

Shadows of men slid into shadows of houses whose lattice shutters hid the secret city women of the Greeks. Sometimes he heard unseen singing, or heard the swishing of silk skirts as he moved close beside the walls. Then a funeral procession passed, where many mourners tramped behind the dead; old men, old women weeping, young, weeping, unveiled white women whose long hair sprinkled sparsely over starry breasts. As they passed, he heard Venetian laughter, saw Venetian ladies in their open windows point their axe-shaped fans. Jewelled chains tinkled as they moved, and

through the clatter, one clear voice explained: "Here come the glad Niobes of Candia, for since it's only as mourners they're allowed to show themselves in daytime on the city streets, these beauties mourn joyously for everyone who dies. Some of them overdo it. See her? She's getting freckled and sunburnt. Ha! they burn easily, these Greeks! Follow her to the end of this, and watch the crowd under her shutters tonight. Then the little jade will put on her long veil and a white dress embroidered heavily with gold, to slip out meekly . . . to some church."

As he passed from the inland section of the city to the port, he left the low, white Moorish houses, and entered the nostalgic replica of Venice. There was St. Mark's Cathedral opposite St. Titus of the Greeks. There was the Doge's Palace, where laughter and song rippled from brocaded clothes; and a blinding stretch of sunset sea before him. Bells were ringing. He turned into St. Titus's Church to pray. It's great Byzantine mosaics rose around him, stern saints with their familiar features sharply outlined, and their draperies in the set folds he knew so well; but these were larger than he had ever seen, more rich in colour. They drew his eyes towards them away from prayer, and through the music he heard the lady's voice that had given body to the man's words of the free beauty of Venetian art.

St. Mark's Cathedral chimes were ringing. He walked the little way, and did not see the people whisper, nor hear their laughter as he went into the Roman

church. The tense, dark, dusty figure stood before an altar painting of a Venetian Madonna, like a woman with a healthy child. Her robes were soft things twisting in the wind, and glazed with red and gold tones he had never seen before.

He could not find the rules of this painting. It was somewhat like life about him, yet not like life—more, a burst of passion. He tried to see how it was done. It had thought and feeling, but no easy proven way.

A priest touched his shoulder, telling him to leave. He saw the church was empty and that the clergy were afraid to go into the sacristy leaving him, a Greek.

The winged lion of St. Mark was black against the night. Domenicos strode past it to the port. He saw the tall ships balance on slow water, heard them whisper "Venice" to the sea. Long, dark reflections shivered from their hulls. Black waves lapped white crests against their sides, and sailors' voices talked in many tongues aboard the vessels heaped with silk and spices, longing to sail again.

The lad worked carrying grain onto the ships, or loading them with malvoisie, the Candian wine of which Venetians sang, but some guard always chased him from the hold, so that he had to watch the tall ship mingle its white sails with the flight of birds. Day after day he circled in the endless line that carried wares onto a ship, only to have to leave it, and in the end it was almost without realization that he found himself in darkness among the bales, heard the tall waves split against the prow, and wished that

he might watch loved Crete sink under the long comber, disappear, never to be forgotten: glaring white rocks cutting the rich glow of flowers; sun and shadow clashing like flame on leaping forms; mystery of hidden women, pride of a defeated race; but to remember always that painting is a sacred art, and ever to remember the hieroglyphics of the saints.

II. Venice (1560)

Sails high, the tall ship came down from the ocean; flags spread, came out of the high waves that had battered her strong flanks and driven her, moaning and crazed, from peak to hollow in the tossing mountains of the sea; and trailing a swaying wake of white, slipped into the lagoon. Past the long lip of the Lido she came on, furling back her banners and gazing at her proud reflection in the waves that lapped low at her hull. When the noise of wind and snap of sails gave way to the breeze and ripple of smooth water, and to the call of quail skimming its edges, a sound of singing rose: singing from the water, singing from little boats, singing unembodied, unidentified, that swelled until the sound of human voice came as an aria above an orchestra, even a snapped-out order, even an angry word, as, "Greek, you'd better sign to sail next time," and, "Greek, here!" and, "Greek, there!"

Domenicos, with his muscles become strong, set down a great bale, slowly so that he could pause to watch the coming of the city in the sea, and hear the voices singing from the islands that they passed; singing of the gondoliers waiting for their passengers; singing of the pedlars as they laid out their wares; singing of the workmen as they broke off work—mingled songs that seemed to put in sound the swelling

of liquid glass that blew into thin iridescent vases, into mirrors for the first time made of crystal instead of steel, into gleaming jewels as lovely as precious gems; while students sang out from the gardens of Murano: "The roses are blooming, and the laurel grows."

"But, Greek, there, work!"

Harder than carrying the kegs of wine, it was harder by far to turn the eyes from fishing-skiffs reined to the sea by purple nets, and from voices singing under painted sails to the ladies whose portraits were painted on the sails, or simply singing to loved Venice.

"But work, men, work!"

While they worked the sound spread from the water to the ship; all singing as they carried bales of spices from the Levant, laughing as the parrots and monkeys broke loose and clattered up the masts.

"I'll never sign to sail again," a sailor cried. The water laughed up to him, and the gleaming roofs came near.

"Greek, come here!" another called. "Greek, can't you speak Turk?"

They grouped around three weeping Turkish slaves: one boy, two girls of sixteen, all beautiful, and guaranteed sound and whole in all parts, visible and occult.

"Tell them, Greek, it's Venice that they're coming to. Tell them they'll be baptized. Domenicos, don't let them cry coming into Venice. Look, girls, Venice! See!" the sailor pointed. "Venice! Listen! Venice!"

The first buildings rose beside the sea. They spread their windows wide, and through the windows gold

was on the walls, and in the windows stood the courtesans. Nude to the waist, by order of the Council, they stood there with painted bodies and arms spread out to turn all men from sins against nature. Down the long canal the great boat slipped, proud of her high sails, floating less on water than on the wings of birds, floating on the music of a thousand gondolas draped with lovely ladies, heaped with flowers, voiced with musicians strumming mandolins or blowing flutes.

Under a mosquito net of gold, Faustina, wife of Tintoretto, lay with her new-born baby by her side; and in the tiny room encrusted heavily with silver, with innumerable swaying figures painted on the walls, twenty Venetian ladies stood with pearls and other jewels on hair, necks, hands, and arms, all beautifully and modestly dressed, showing no more than six fingers nude below the shoulder, and with their faces and their chests made up skilfully. One, who stood in the window, called: "Faustina, a ship from the Orient arrives. What a good omen for your Marietta, and what a lovely sight it is! My eyes never tire of a single scene in Venice. It is all that I can do to console myself that sometimes I must close it out to sleep, and even then my dreams are of designs of sun and cloud sounding the lute of the lagoons." She turned and looked past Faustina to Jacopo Robusti Tintoretto in his long red toga of the patrician, with his patrician's sword hung by his side. Faustina followed the glance, and smiled to her husband, full of gratitude that today, without her nagging, he should have put on the toga,

and that he should have arranged this room for her in the Venetian luxury for which he did not care. Her tired fingers stroked the silver border of her sheet, played over the thick embroidery of her gown, and touched the infant Marietta, as the tall ship sailed past; and Tintoretto turned to a servant who had touched his arm to whisper: "The actors are outside. They want you to come and do a perspective for their scene and help them with the dialogue."

"Tell them it is not possible."

"I told them, but they beg."

"Tell them, late tonight, then, I shall come and do them their perspective, but as to dialogue, my child is born, and that would be their play. My joy in Marietta could not be hidden any more than a hole in a black stocking."

Within the shadow of the ship dim flames of funeral torches glowed brightly. The long line marched after l'Aretino, scourge of princes, l'Aretino, Titian's friend; and Titian wept, following the corpse wound in cloth of gold—wept for l'Aretino whom he had loved while others feared, l'Aretino, licentious cynic, but who had spread the painter's fame, l'Aretino, brilliant writer and beloved friend, who had died miserably, without confession, having lost his balance laughing at an obscene joke, and, with his gullet crammed with food and wine, had fallen against the table, cracked his skull, and croaked. Only Titian wept as the procession let itself down into gondolas and pulled away under the swelling sides of the towering galleon. The others

rejoiced that they would no longer have to pay the beast to keep him still, but to Titian, the terror of the rest had been a friend, and Titian was at an age where deaths are plentiful and friends are few.

The ship shouldered into dock with naked spars, and with a cry the men swarmed off of her onto the soil, into Venice.

Domenicos, after this long time on the sea, felt the land in waves beneath his feet, felt the terror of the ocean at its height, as wave on wave in approaching storm and in confusion and in passion Venice came, Venice tossing under him, Venice swirling over him, Venice, Venice as the singing night clouded the gay island.

The sailors swarmed in a ball of merriment over the narrow bridges. Some were left singing under lighted windows:

> "The water that laves that face and breast of thine:
> I pray thee, fair, throw it not away;
> It would be sweet to mingle with my wine
> When we drink together on a merry day. . . ."

Laughter rippled through the song, and light from the window glazed the upturned face. For each one that was left, three new men came, laughing and singing, and reeling past San Giorgio, the section of the Greeks, on to San Marco, where in mad confusion, beating drums, comedians arrived among the market stands: women singing, buffoons leaping, braying like asses, baying like dogs, crowing and cackling, brandish-

ing vipers and monkeys and parrots. On a stand to the side, a doctor lashed himself until blood flowed, then poured on an ointment that healed the wound; and the people watching marvelled merrily, and paid the somersaulting clown who mocked the speaker; while Harlequin and his lady fought and loved. Next to them an imitation Spanish captain blustered coward's threats that were lost in howls of glee sharpened by fear at this baiting of their too powerful near neighbour, Spain, already ruler of Sicily, Naples, and Milan, who only three years before had overflowed to Rome and left a mangled, ruined Campania to mourn, while the terror spread to Flanders and to France. Joy to mock at Spain and not be hurt, but to turn the back on Spanish thunder and listen to the false pedant blurt loud, lame Latin so amusing that the very coins seemed to burst with their own laughter out of wallets and clatter on the square. More performers leapt miraculous heights, from which the women came down so fast, they left their broad skirts swirling in wide bells above their thighs while hammers beat the rhythm for the whole, as workmen built a platform in the center of the square under the direction of players who grouped about. These were the artisans of the theatre vaguely known now as the Commedia dell'Arte, the gay executioners of the academic stage, which had become so pompous and so dull that no wealth of setting or of costume could keep the audience from yawning at its stupid repetitions and bad acting of classic themes. But these other entertainers, young, intelligent, boldly did

away with written scripts and, throwing themselves on a bare scenario, a few stock phrases, and a wide knowledge of the science, literature, and gossip of the time, their own quick minds and precise acting, improvised their plays, and with caustic satire massacred the decadent followers of the humanists, and cleared the way for an art which did not come.

The group of sailors swelled and shrank, scattering through the mob, gathering again, singing, laughing, screaming. "But, Domenicos, what's wrong? Don't Greeks ever sing? Don't Greeks ever laugh?"

Their voices drew off and he stood among all strangers. From the water, sweet, melancholy songs. On the land, hard, clear, sharp calls, but no words, came to him; only sound and motion beating on him while the scene turned dark.

Then it seemed a single personality cut across the square and the crowd parted like sides of a stream. "Ah, Tintoretto! Tintoretto!" The broad-shouldered man swung onto the platform. "Jacopo, darling," in a woman's voice, "I am using the phrase you sent us, changing it a little bit. Love, I make it, is like the hole in a black stocking."

Tintoretto stood among the actors, no longer the patrician, but in working clothes, son of a Venetian dyer, man of the people, loving, loved. By the dim light of a held lamp Domenicos saw the few strokes of his brush throw a long street onto the flat drop. He heard the actors squeal. Perspective was a new toy

for them, a thing for playing tricks, a thing to conjure with.

"The light a little this way, Flaminia," Tintoretto said.

Domenicos stared, the name so near, but the lady held the lamp so high above her head he could only distinguish a slender silhouette, and could not know whether it might be she from Crete who moved about the platform, her long skirts bubbling over hidden feet. And, "Oh, Tintoret," she said, "you must make me a wide window, for there is to be a scene inside a room, and the audience must see it, so it must be through a window. There's no other way, is there? Some one talked of taking down a wall, but that's ridiculous. A room without a wall!"

Whether it was she from Crete, this little actress, at a time when in Italy alone women appeared to an audience of men, and ladies could only watch when fully masked and segregated. . .

"And it mustn't be too high, because I have to jump out of the window with the old man after me; but it must be high enough, because later, when the door is guarded, Zanni jumps from it to get my letter and then jumps back, and when the leap is high enough it's beautiful."

Next day Domenicos returned to see the face. He stood among the crowd that screamed with joy as masked Harlequin played tricks, and Pantaloon in his old-man mask heaved love's young sigh. He was afraid the woman, too, would wear a mask. But when

the lady came, her face was bare, and yet he could not tell. He saw her cross the stage as smoothly as a sail on quiet waters. He saw the motion of her lips, and saw the graceful swaying of her form, but her features would not settle in his mind. He looked, and learned the existence of beauty that refuses form.

For a short, indefinite time that seemed too long, things swung into emotion, and emotion crystallized again to things, and Venice was a sea in which the bewildered boy beat and fought, trying not to lose himself, trying not to drown. There was no rest for him among the Greeks, a frightened colony of exiles from invasions of the Turks, grateful for the refuge Venice gave, but anxious to become a power again. They warned themselves continually: "Be thankful and be careful. Easy is what does it. Look, scholars speak our language in the gardens of Murano; we have been allowed to build our own church, and the artists, who were tearing down the Greek mosaics in San Marco, have been stopped by a decree of the Council that we had it pass on religious grounds. Now, if we can learn to act and paint like them. . . ."

From their timidity Domenicos threw himself into the noise and the confusion of the Piazza San Marco. He wandered among the market stalls and the stands of the performers, or stood beside the artists who were allowed to work under the arcades and sell their work.

He stayed most often next to a bitter man of middle age and wondered how he might begin to speak. When one day he saw two men stroll by, one in the full vigour of his forties, the other in the first withering of age, saw them speaking shyly to each other, as though their gestures were trying to entrap a frightened sympathy, and when one smiled he glanced up quickly as to say, "You saw me smile?"; and the painter, by whose stall the boy stood, turned from his work on a marriage chest to look at them and laugh, the lad caught his breath and asked him who they were.

"Titian and Tintoretto," the man replied. "After they've been enemies for years, even since Tintoretto as a kid was apprenticed to Titian, and thrown out after ten days because the old man found a rival in the first drawings that he made. Ah, there's an artist and a man! After ten days' study, thrown out. Then he sends for casts of Michel Angelo and of the antiques, scrawls across his studio wall: 'Titian's colour and Michel Angelo's drawing,' and sets to work, with everyone saying he's so generous to call Titian's colour his ideal after that; and Titian, with the thorn in his side of being continually reminded that Michel Angelo had said he could not draw, does all he can to check him at every step. We started out together, Tintoret and I. I was even a bit ahead. You may have heard of me—Andrea Schiavone."

"No. What brought them together?"

Schiavone looked coldly at the boy, and whether it was the accent, or the face, or clothes, he answered in

hard syllables: "Hatred of the Greeks. Disgust at their mosaics in the church, and fury at their having had the Council decree that they could not be ripped down unless they were replaced integrally. And these men are right. It would be hard to think of anything more hideous than those things are. As first crude, primitive attempts; but now that we know how. . ."

The great church of San Marco trembled like a battlefield and a wave of fear swept over the pale boy, for he had seen the paintings of these men in public buildings and knew that they were great; yet (while he watched with adoration their walking back and forth, and longed to touch their robes but did not dare, more than he would have dared to rush up the steps of the Doge's Palace, bursting past the guards) he remembered that inside San Marco Church its primitive mosaics swelled his blood. He was frightened by their call to him, feeling it was the superstitious hold of a cruder race; frightened by their unrestraint of furious colour and the passion breaking through their angular, still forms—frightened at his loving a thing these gods despised; and yet he felt repulsed by the heavy forms and gentle colours of mosaics from designs that Titian drew. Torn by the schism of painting and by the cross-tides in his own blood, he walked away in silent terror. He was so young then that he could not know it was not a tie of atavism, but a sure instinct that responded to the fitness of the drawings to the place, the fitness of workmanship to stuff, and the

majesty of a passionate and unsure struggle to free the soul.

His panic threw him back into the Greeks, among whom he found work, helping an unknown painter, one who tried to copy in a tight, Byzantine way, the sweep of Venetian art. He saw the awkwardness of his master's work, not of his own. He fumed and raged, thought that, like Tintoretto, he was held back in all he did by the jealousy of the elder and by the stupid curbing of his line. His despair and terror boasted and shouted aloud until in fury his employer sent him away.

Then Domenicos went off by himself to work. Through his perplexity there came a thread of joy as he felt his fingers move swiftly and surely, and watched his painting grow. He dreamed all night of shifting forms. He woke up saying, "Yes," and rushed to his little block of wood, to work and work some more. When the thing was done, he told himself that it was not so lovely as a Titian, and yet resembled one. He felt a glow of modesty in not admitting even to himself that some parts were more fine. His confidence increased as he did another picture. He began to hum in harmony with the singing on the lagoons. He imagined very soon he would display his work on the market-place, as all young artists did, and maybe Titian and Tintoretto, walking by, would stop in admiration. They might find it young, he thought, studied it, and wondered how.

When he had made a small collection, Domenicos

set up his stand on the Rialto, ranged his work around him, and glanced at the other artists with their things. He pitied them, so many were quite hopeless. Soon he thought, the Council would let him have a stall under the arcades of San Marco, and then let Schiavone, making his living on wedding chests and copies of the masters, dare to look at him and speak against the Greeks! Only a short while now, then recognition, and even while he dreamed of it, a hurried little man stopped and picked up one of his paintings. Domenicos watched his face and saw it wrinkle to a shrug as he dropped the panel and walked off, laughing, "Greek!" Another and another stopped, and always left with laughter or with shrugs of, "Greek!" Forever "Greek." The boy thought that it must be prejudice caused by his features or his clothes. It could not be his art, these beautiful, free things that he did with memory of Fioretta or Flaminia; and with Titian's paintings in his mind. Day by day, while the silly birds gurgled over the water and crowds of gondolas clotted by, he felt his eyes burn slowly down to ash, and felt his mouth draw bitter. Now he shuddered when anyone stopped at his stand. Their touching of his pictures bruised his flesh.

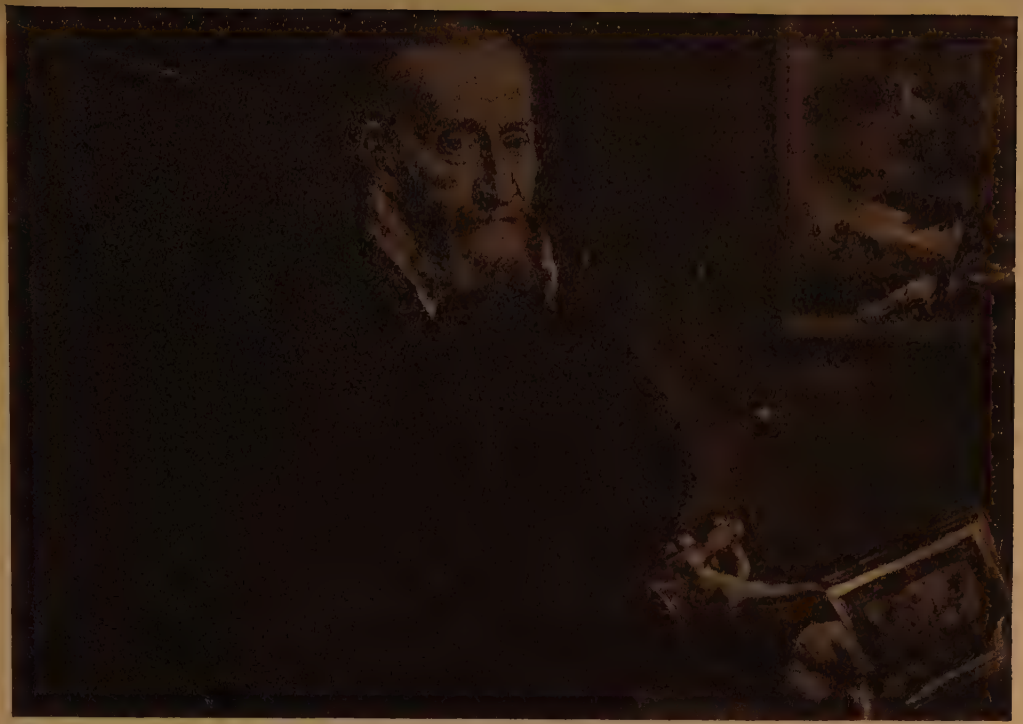
Once he thought he heard a woman's voice, like Fioretta's or Flaminia's, and thought with joy, "If she should stop!" and then with agony, "If she should laugh!" So when he saw a white hand take up his work, he tried to snatch it back. The sensitive, gnarled fingers held it firmly. He looked up and saw tall

ladies walking by, but the man who bent to hold his picture was alone. He followed the warm red velvet coat up to the short grey square-chopped beard, and above it to the keen white face, and when he saw the understanding eyes, his whole being crumbled down inside his skin.

Gently the old man helped him gather up his work. Somehow the lad went with him to his home and found himself with a reading-glass in his hand looking over illuminated books. "My work," Clovio said, placing a golden dish of cakes and a silver bowl of fruit beside the boy. While Domenicos gazed in admiration through the magnifying glass at the work of this great illuminator, called the Michel Angelo of miniature, and saw figures drawn no bigger than an ant become perfect and tremendous forms, his hand reached for the fruit, but drew quickly back because he was so starved he was ashamed. Then Clovio took the book away and was the first to bite into the red flesh of a purple fig. "Can't it tempt you?" he asked. "It comes way from your own country."

First Clovio praised the spirit of the boy's work, then pointed out its awkwardness of form, until at last Domenicos saw its defects and cried: "Will God never let me die? First I sinned in leaving the monastery. Now the devil has struck me blind with pride!"

Clovio's hand was soothing as Clovio's voice said: "God, and not the devil, blinds every artist's eyes to his own work; for if the power of criticism did not stop, there would be no creation. Haven't you ever



Don Julio Clovio
El Greco, 1570

wondered whether the Eternal One Himself would not have changed the world a little bit if He had not worked blindfold? You are very young, and what you try to do is an endless thing, never to be attained, but always sought. Whether you can go any way at all . . . Ah, but you're still a child. Your work is crude, but under it there is a spark of spirit. It must grow. There are things you must forget, more that you must learn, and it's hard to find a master. I cannot. . . . I'm always on the move. But there's da Ponte from Bassano looking for a helper, and no one will leave Venice, although Bassano is a pleasant place forty miles back towards the Tyrolean Alps, and da Ponte is a good man. There may be something there that we can do."

The unaccustomed food and kindness mounted to his head and, drunk with gratitude, the boy stooped to kiss the sleeve of the velvet cloak. Clovio stopped the dizzy gesture, looked once into his eyes, pressed the boy against his shoulder, and embraced him as a father would his son.

III. Bassano

During the short sail from Venice to the mainland, Jacopo da Ponte, known as Bassano, turned his broad back on the boy and slouched against the railing to watch the rising sun and sinking moon silver the rippling water. Sometimes the captain joined him. Then loud laughs were blown over their shoulders, while Domenicos stared at the ship's shadow on the sea. On land da Ponte's thought was all for his sleek ponies. He rushed to throw his arms around their necks, to slap their flanks and let them rub their muzzles in his face, while his fat dog yapped against his knees.

The little horses had an uncomfortable way of trotting so closely together that their riders' legs rubbed constantly. Sometimes, too, the ponies playfully bit one another and jumped aside, or reared to avoid stepping on the little dog that ran between their feet. Da Ponte breathed in the dawn air noisily. He slouched easily in his saddle. The country seemed to nestle in his lap, but Domenicos' rigid form jolted from his seat to his russet hair. It was as though he looked lonesomely through a window at the joy that swarmed outside his thin pale face.

"No flat country could be lovelier than this," da Ponte said. "Every time I stay in Venice for a week I want to roll on the earth when I leave it, and bite the

grass and dig my nails deep into the soil. Trees that are not in gardens. Grass that is not trimmed. Honest, wormy dirt."

Domenicos was silent, for it seemed he spoke more to the pigeons in the trees, more to the rabbits that shot in swift leaps forward sprung by the levers of long ears, than to the boy.

Sunlight filtered through broad new leaves. Sunlight reflected on the tangled grass until green came up, and green washed down, and the ponies seemed to prance through liquid green.

"What do you call yourself?" da Ponte asked.

"Domenicos Theotocopoulos."

"Why, Glop-glop-glop-glop-glop. My turkey'll call you that. I'll just call you 'Il Greco'" (Italian for "the Greek"). "You're lucky to have me call you at all, you know. Clovio seems to have some faith in you, but he's Croat himself and doesn't mind the Greeks. I do, and you've a bad name, even among them. They say you're conceited and stubborn. You'll have to get over that to work for me. I wouldn't have taken you except I need a man; my children are too small. Francesco, he's the oldest, is thirteen. Then there's Giambattista, then Maria, and then Leandro, and another coming on. I like that. To sit around the fire winter evenings with the dogs and the children, and always a baby on my knee. It's a rich sort of life. I should have been a farmer, not a painter; but my father painted, and my grandfather, and they wanted me to do it, too, and when they saw I wouldn't work

at home, they apprenticed me in Venice. I'll tell you what made an artist out of me. Bonifacio—he was my master—didn't want to let me learn to paint, so he kept me grinding colours and preparing canvases, and locked himself up in his own room to work. You see, I'm stubborn, too, and that made me so mad I peeked through the keyhole and found out how he did it, out of spite. You won't have troubles like that with me. You can paint as much as you want to, as soon as you learn enough so that you can. Orders pile up on me so fast I have to neglect my garden. I have no time for my flute. Then I go to find a worker, and have to take a Greek. You're lucky none of the Venetians would come. Venice is a city in love with herself, and it won't do her any good. When I was a boy she had a fleet of her own as fine as any on the seas, and now she hasn't sixteen vessels fit to carry salt. And why? Because until a Venetian is starved to death he won't leave the place. Maybe I have to thank starvation for even you. You're a hungry-looking fellow."

The ponies clopped along past farms and past broad gardens, past the proud estates of district governors. They trotted on the edges of the streams, pranced before their bright reflections, and seemed with their whinnying to mock the thin, stiff, jolted Greek, while da Ponte, square-built peasant of fifty, sat as part of his fat mount.

"It's not quite country yet," da Ponte said. "These aristocrats imitate their Venice, just as the Venetians think they have the mountains, and the country—

rivers, land, and sea—cooped up in their gardens. You don't need to think you scare me, Greco, when you don't talk. I'm used to that. You see this pup of mine; he was like you when I first found him, skinny and mean, but we fed him up and petted him, and now he'd break his heart to speak to me. He looks into my face and wriggles his nose like this, and thinks he's talking the same way I do. Why, it's like this even with my own children! When they're first born, you can't make them say a word; but I just talk on at them, anyway, and after a year or so, sure enough, they begin to speak. Then they come right along. Francesco, now, he's starting in to be as nice a little painter as you please."

Da Ponte looked up, and stopped to wonder whether it were possible this boy was not much older than his son. Domenicos turned his face from the stare, but could not hide the drawn profile with its hurt pride and its pain. Da Ponte saw that actually the boy must suffer, sitting like a ramrod on his horse, taking every jolt the whole length of his spine; so he reined his own beast in, and the pair fell into an easy walk. Domenicos relaxed slightly. How thin his lips were drawn!

"Il Greco," da Ponte said, "don't feel hurt at that. My friends call me Bassano. It's only the failures stick to their own names, like Schiavone. Titian, who says Vicelli? Tintoretto, Robusti's not so good. Veronese instead of Caliari. Now, Il Greco, you're beginning good; and you're lucky that I found you,

as I said. Venice is a hard game to play. You have to have worked with Titian to be anybody, and Titian doesn't teach. That's why Bordoni left him, and when he found Tintoretto didn't need to learn, he kicked him out to discourage him; and although the guild of painters has a rule never to let a member interfere and turn away commissions from another, do you think Titian cares for that? Whatever he can do against Tintoretto and Bordoni's quickly done. Of course, he helps Veronese, but that's another thing. There's an aristocrat and a lovely musician, and handsome boy about his home. For God's sake, Greco, smile! My wife will think I'm bringing in a corpse, and as she's less than a month now from being delivered, you see what that might mean. She'll make you smile. She'll make you fat as soon as she's able to be around again. My Elizabetta—there's the woman that a painter needs, quiet and unassuming, gentle as any other country lass. She'll feed you well, and good red wine will put some colour in that face!"

"I don't drink wine."

"No? You will. Look at me! Well, look at me!"

Il Greco gazed as steadily as he could at the broad, red man.

"Why, Greco, boy, I heard you were a terror, and that's why I started out with you the way I did. Now I see you're nothing but a worried kid. Look. Relax in your saddle or your backbone will be bursting through your skull. That's better. Make yourself part of the horse. Give way, then breathe the land-

scape into you. It's hard for you to let go, isn't it? I can see that now. You'll like Bassano. It's a lovely place with a real river running through it, and in the distance the blue peaks of the Alps, and my wife will be just crazy to fatten you. Long time since she's had such a job, and it's a fine life in the country with the animals. I painted Noah entering his ark in my own gardens where I've a brace of beasts of every kind. Why, what's the matter? You haven't tears in your eyes? You're not sick?"

"When I left the monastery, the brother I loved best called me 'fuel for hell.' I said he'd see. I'd do something nearer God than he would, but I'm afraid I never shall."

"And you weren't even listening to me—just brooding nonsense. You're lucky to have found me. It's a good life in the country, and the place to grow. You would have been lost in Venice. You could have cried for your monastery then, and no one would have heard you. There's a city in love with herself, and not another thought for anyone. . . ."

Nine years of gentle seasons somehow pass, even when they begin at seventeen—nine years of study, nine years of work, learning how to paint in the Venetian way. Sometimes letters from Clovio came, written from one capital or another, while Greco, who had travelled from the far end of the Christian world, felt

stopped, locked in the village of Bassano among country folk, and yet he began to know the glow of a plant that has taken root, the joy of feeling strength creep up in him.

The year 1563 was tragic for Bassano. Spring, the real commencement of the year (the season when the sap begins to flow and all the branches open trustfully, exposing their icy leaves to the young sun)—spring came too early, was followed by frost which withered the green buds back into the vines; and when the few blossoms that survived opened their frail petals, rain poured down and stripped them off. Da Ponte could not speak. He struck an heroic pose standing in his window, and blew his flute, played to the flood of rain, pressing his breath out, pressing his soul out so that his heart would have room inside his chest to burst. He was grateful that Greco had learned to paint well enough to carry the work on, and even give some lessons to the boy Francesco. True, there came a difference into the production of the studio, but there was nothing that da Ponte could do, for summer showed the aphides in the fruit reproducing parthenogenetically. Moreover, the heavy rains had been followed by drought, so he had to plan to lead the water from the river. Then he almost lost his finest cow when she calved of a beautiful, white-faced heifer, and it took all the care of his wife, children, and himself to pull her through; so he was grateful, and glad to admit it, that he had taken Greco when he did, and that the boy was as he was, skinny with nerves and ambition.

It had bothered him at first to see the quantity the lad could eat and never fatten, and it had made him angry that he never learned to love the hills. Often Bassano had cried: "Until you fall in love with life, you will not paint. Forget the rules and look at nature." But now he saw it was all for the best. If Greco cared for the soil, he would be unable to work while it suffered, even less able than Jacopo, who had reached the balance of maturity, and yet could not do more than change a detail here and there, and sometimes tell Greco to study his canvases more carefully; but while he directed, he still thought of the pests that gnawed the trees.

Sometimes it seemed to him that Greco did so exactly as he wished, that he had not realized himself how well his work was planned. Other times he was furious to see the boy had changed a line of his composition, yet even there, at times the change seemed best. He flattered the boy then, said that he would make an artist of him yet—if he would only realize that a tree was more sacred than an icon. He could not understand why Greco never could succeed with animals, but seemed to have no realization of their fat, round souls. Da Ponte had to do them every time himself; but he came to trust Domenicos more and more with human figures, particularly as the harvest season came, and the slender crop, because of its very slenderness, had to be cared for more, and saved more jealously from the hungry birds. So, by winter, time of rest, when all the plants fold in their leaves to sleep,

Greco had come into young manhood and a position of responsibility.

During the long evenings of the dark of the year, they sat about the fire while the wind and thunder teased the blackened sky. All the stock was shut away. All the sap was safely in the roots. Elizabetta wove cloth for the children's clothes. Jacopo sat with Silvia sleeping on his knee—little blond Silvia, who had been born soon after Greco came. Francesco was next to his father. The boy of sixteen had started to work in the studio that year. Then there were Giambattista, and Leandro, and eight-year-old Maria on a low stool among the dogs and cats, but already beginning to put on lady's airs. She tried to make out why Il Greco was different from a brother; he did not play with you the way a brother did, but when you bothered him, he was more gentle than the others. Besides, you can't marry your brother or your father when you're grown, and there was something about—— Il Greco might not always stay. She said, "I love you, Greco," and reached for his hand; but he patted her head against his knee and let it rest there while he continued scribbling, scratching on a pad.

"For goodness sake, stop drawing, boy," da Ponte said.

They were all drowsy by the fire—the parents, and the children, and the animals. Only Greco was restless in his chair, his fingers always working over lines or twisting and tearing whatever came into his hand. His thoughts were hidden deep inside himself behind

drawn blinds. His ears were shut. He did not hear Jacopo tell about his plans for gardening next year, nor that he would not dream of holding public office ever again, with the silly townsfolk expecting him to work. But when he spoke of art, Il Greco's pencil stopped and Maria braided the limp fingers of his unconscious hand.

Usually, da Ponte talked of his own work. He told that his friends in Venice had complimented him on the year's production, saying that a new feeling had begun to creep into his art. They called it sensitiveness, and sense of pain. He said: "A thing like that makes me glad I am an artist, after all. It gives some consolation for my suffering at the blight of my crops. Another season the trees will have forgotten, while my paintings are there to endure."

Sometimes he was moody, thinking of what Greco had done during the day, and said, with a glance at the boy's busy hand: "Think of my work harder. Imbibe my spirit more thoroughly. When I tell you to forget the rigidity of icons, don't exaggerate. You generally make the draperies look like running water. Be careful what you do, and study me. I was a famous man before you were conceived. They exempted me from taxes that long ago because of the excellence of my art. Unless you are incapable—which you are not—it's rank impertinence for you to paint differently from me."

Jacopo looked on art as an agreeable friend. There was never fear, nor argument, nor questioning in what

he did. He told that, when a placid noble went to Tintoretto to have a jewelled likeness done, Tintoretto sent him to Bassano, saying, "He excels in animals."

Jacopo laughed. "You will not have that said of you, my Greco, until you put some peace into your soul. For God's sake, boy, stop scribbling! Come here!" He moved his hand above the baby Silvia's bulging forehead and her golden hair. They saw how soundly the child slept by the round of her closed eyelids and the softness of her lips. Da Ponte whispered: "See the beauty of her plastic, peaceful form, and learn these lovely things from life. Stop pestering your soul!"

Bassano carried the child off and put her to bed. He came back shyly, fingering his smallest flute. "I'll only play very softly, Elizabetta."

But other times he gossiped about Venice, said he had heard that Titian and Tintoretto were at swords' points again, now that they had found that they could ignore the Council's decree and go on tearing down mosaics from San Marco. Greco stared into the fire, and, while he thought of them digging out the ancient, brilliant stones, he was surprised that he did not feel the scene more vitally, but could listen while Jacopo told that Tintoretto had scored heavily over Titian in taking a commission away from Veronese, whom Titian favoured. But Tintoretto claimed that he could do the job so much like Veronese, no one would know the difference, and that he would do the work for half the

price, and did, thereby proving that, since he could paint like another man, it was only jealousy that had made Titian send him away; and by showing, too, that he could paint as well as Veronese; and by his carelessness of money, which is Titian's passion.

"Ah, well," da Ponte said after a long laugh, "it seems a little cruel, now that Titian's old, but it's not a gentle game you're in for, boys, and Tintoretto's the first real rival Titian's ever had. Besides, it's no more than his due. He started his career with such a bitter fight against his own master, that when he won, Bellini died. That was almost before even I was born. Then the plague killed every other rival, so that he has been the uncontested master for two generations. He must be seventy-five or eighty, or even ninety. Nobody knows. It seems he's always been an old man in his violet skull-cap and his long white beard, and I don't believe he'll ever change. Surely, unless there's another plague, he'll never die. It must be about thirteen years ago there was a rumour of his death. It seemed time, but you see, it was ridiculous. He's always been so much older than the rest, and so much more important, that every painter with a name has had to pass through his studio, like being born; and I suppose that, in a way, because he's been so careless about us, and never in his life has deigned to teach, it gives us the resentment of illegitimate children.

"But don't forget—whatever I may say about his life—he's the greatest of all painters. I always remember how, when the Emperor Charles the Fifth first

called him to his court at Augsburg, all of Venice raced to Titian's house to buy up every scrap of work he'd ever done, in fear that he would never paint again for anybody less than emperors. It's true that he is hard, but it may be that all the sweet, rich beauty of his nature leaked out of his life into his art. It seems that he once loved a Violante, Palma Veccio's child, and that there was quite a scandal at the time. Songs were sung about them, and whatever their friends tried to do only added the refrain to the most lascivious ballad: 'Cease here, for Titian's not licentious.' Then he married Cecelia, the barber's daughter, whom he had brought from Cadore five years before, and who seemed at that time on the point of death after bearing him the child Pomponio. But, as so often happens, the marriage service did what doctors could not do, and Cecelia lived to give him Lavinia and Orazio. Titian even acted broken-hearted when finally she died. Still, I often wonder whether it doesn't rankle him to have married probably his servant, and seen plebeian Tintoretto take an aristocrat. As to Violante, I don't know what became of her, except that in his most famous picture Titian painted her clothed like a princess, and with the dismay of the Virgin on her face. But all that is so long ago, with all the women dead, it's like love stories of our parents, unbelievable. Excepting that I wonder why Titian not only signs religious pictures, but puts himself in them, as Joseph of Arimathæa, the man who tried to be a friend of both Pilate and the Lord; whereas you never find his name on

nudes. It's as though he were ashamed of love, or else afraid, for he often paints it very near to death. Perhaps that fear taught him how to open up his skies, and so to bring about the miracle of heaven touching earth, that when Emperor Charles the Fifth turned mystic and renounced his kingdoms and the world, he still clung to nine of Titian's pictures and kept them by him in the bleak monastery of Yuste. They even tell that, when the emperor died, he hardly saw the confessors and the priests that packed around him, but turned his eyes above them to gaze at Titian's paintings, and spoke his last ecstatic words: 'Aye, Jesus!' into Titian's heaven."

The next spring burst out with delicious bloom. "No one with a heart could be indoors," da Ponte cried, and yet insisted that Francesco stay and work as long as Greco would, and the difficulty was to make Il Greco quit. After long summer days, on early winter nights, he only wanted an oil-lamp to keep him scratching on. Now da Ponte flattered himself that he had had the nerve to take a Greek. Things began to blossom in his garden that were never seen in northern Italy before. He had only to sketch his compositions, retouch the pictures, once they were done, and keep the boy from hearing too much praise. He regretted having allowed a "Descent from the Cross" to go out of his studio looking like the work of two separate hands, but he

was late already with the order, and it had been in that grim winter of '66 when Elizabetta nearly died in giving birth to Gerolamo. Surely no man could have been asked to do more than repaint the most important figures, and let the rest go off with a stern warning to Greco to work more carefully.

Da Ponte watched Il Greco paint as though all seasons were but one, and he began to feel that he had chosen and taught the boy so well that his own life became a garden where he walked from the growing pictures to the plants whose flowers seemed to open of themselves, and yet one and the other were due to his ceaseless care. He began to amuse himself by painting life-like dragons, setting them up in the foliage near the road, and laughing as the startled peasants screamed and ran away. Then he composed new airs for his flute, and started to teach Maria to sing. She remembered words, and thought she sang a tune:

> "O moon that lends light to the stars above,
> Lend light unto my dear; behind him move
> And tell him in what heart he's left his love."

"But no," Bassano cried, "your voice is flat. Now listen. What was it? 'Moon that gives light' . . . Go on."

His flute began again, Maria's words came after it and continued while her father stopped to wander off in search of another melody.

Greco stamped his foot, but painted on. What were they to him, the Pontes' music and the peasants'

screams? When Francesco looked up from his page and smiled, Il Greco wished the boy would go out with his father and leave him to himself, so that while he worked there might come again that feeling of elation, and of wonder, and of fear that had swept over him in Crete and made his fingers damn his soul to eternal fire. Often now that same sensation came, most often when he was alone, but sometimes it even took him when da Ponte was there. Then he was afraid the man might see the flush and tenseness of his face, and he wondered afterwards if it were true that his body had risen from the ground, but dared not ask. If da Ponte changed the work he had done at such times, he had to dig his nails into himself to keep from murdering his master. If it happened when Francesco was around, he minded less, for even in his laughter at his father's simple fun, Il Greco felt a sympathetic strain due to the seeds of madness already mingled with the boy's thick flesh—the mania which was to end Francesco's life at forty-five.

Domenicos became less amenable with time, more careless of his master's teaching, so that Jacopo began to remember stories of Greco's stubbornness, and said he should have known better than to trust a Greek. Still, the boy had bridged the hard interval. Francesco, at nineteen, could paint quite well, and Giambattista was passing twelve, almost ready to come into the studio. Then Greco could get out, unless he made good. It might be just as well, considering the way that Maria followed him about, but she was only

eleven and Greco did not seem to have such ideas in his head. Still, it wouldn't be impossible at that, if Greco ever straightened out. Besides, Bassano could not stay angry while summer followed spring, and winter followed summer, until spring brought new life again.

Il Greco painted steadily because it was his passion to follow line with line, and make colour spring from colour, and moments when the earth disappeared from under him became constantly less rare. He hardly noticed that da Ponte seldom flattered him, and gradually he ceased to care when da Ponte raged: "My little children paint more like me already than you can do!"

He told himself it did not matter that da Ponte changed his work, since he had done the thing in his own way, that it was ended once it left his hand; and yet he found himself touching the retouched pictures, and trying to feel out where his lines had been. He repeated to himself aloud that all that counted was to be clothed, and fed, and given the materials to paint. It never occurred to him that he should sign his pictures (since he had begun in the Byzantine school, whose artists are anonymous), until one day Francesco said: "I'll be putting my name on my canvases in a year or two. You'll never be allowed to sign."

Il Greco stared at the curve of the boy's back. The sound of charcoal scratching on the page sent shivers down his spine.

The day seemed hollow and the air was quiet, for Jacopo had gone to Venice a little time before, and the

calls of the children to one another, and the sounds of work about the house, had no thread to bind them when Jacopo's flute was still.

Maria da Ponte came and went. She was fourteen, and it had become a game with her to see whether she could make Greco's crayon stop. She stood in the window of the studio and sang:

"Tell him in what heart he's left his love."

Francesco called Giambattista to work, told him, now that he was sixteen, it was time he was more serious. Maria sang and laughed into a flower. She stood in the open door. Dogs and cats leaked in. Il Greco did not see or hear. Instead of Jacopo's laughter, instead of the squeak of his flute to give these things their unity, they seemed held together by the sigh of the outsider. Was he, then, to work forever for these people, or to work for them until they were ready to let him drop, and never be allowed to sign, nor even to save his pictures from da Ponte's heavy brush?

Days before he was expected, the dogs rushed yelping down the road, swinging their bodies sideways with their energetic tails and barking glad barks that meant their master. There was the whinny of Jacopo's horse. The children dashed to meet him, Elizabetta walked solidly behind the three-year-old Gerolamo, her thick tanned hands near his curly head and her whole body protecting the leaping creature from the rush of animals. Greco watched from the studio. He saw Jacopo swing the child high above his head; but the

toss was not so high, and the squeal was less joyous than most days, for Jacopo looked beyond his family and asked, angrily: "Where is Il Greco? Where's that Greek?"

The two stared at each other a long time, while speeches blustered underneath Jacopo's lips to sink back unworded. At last he took his wallet from his belt, threw it at the boy and shouted: "Go to Venice! Go, and stay until I send for you! Get out of here! What are you waiting for? Can't you even do a simple thing like that? Go and amuse yourself. Show yourself every day on San Marco and on the Rialto, but get away from here!"

One would have thought that it was Greco who had played the flute, the place became so silent once he was gone. The boys roamed outside the locked door of the studio, and Maria kept the small children quiet and away.

Greco made the long ride by himself, wondering and worried about his master's anger and its cause. His horse pranced through a golden storm of autumn leaves, but he found no pleasure in the long shafts of dusty sun that fell on his shoulders, and over them, and off. He was annoyed by the glad confusion of Venice, could not think beneath its sea of song, and he walked grimly through the city, puzzling about

Jacopo's fury, and remembering how Francesco said, "You'll never sign."

He stood in a group before a platform to watch a play, but was unable to enjoy the pantomime, and the actress was not beautiful. When the pedant came on to the scene, folding and unfolding the edges of his ridiculous, huge, shabby hat, he could not laugh. Then he was surprised to hear him sing under a window da Ponte's song:

> "O moon that lends light to the stars above,
> Lend light unto my dear . . ."

He saw then that the broad red mask was made to mimic da Ponte's face, and when the pedant's lackey hid under the pedant's arm and spoke while the pedant gestured, Il Greco turned and walked away, staring ahead of him so hard that a lady, who stood at the edge of the crowd, put her hand up quickly to feel whether her mask had not fallen from her face.

At the end of some weeks a messenger from Bassano came, bringing a finished canvas signed and dated in huge letters, "Jacopo da Ponte da Bassano fecit, 1569." He showed the work to Greco and told him to come back. He said: "I left Jacopo burning the dry leaves. You could hardly breathe for the stinging of the air. Still, it was better than the gloom we had before, with the atmosphere so poisoned that everyone who drew breath began to cry. It cleared a little with Jacopo loading the canvas on the cart. It was the first time he'd been outside the studio since you left. His

wife had her arm around him, treating him like a sick boy, and he did look haggard. It was probably to keep from breaking down that he turned from her and began to light the leaves; but she followed him and kissed him, and when I cracked the whip I think I heard him say, "Now let Venice talk of my not doing my own pictures any more."

Bare trees formed a heavy net along the road, and as Greco rode between them, from time to time he laughed aloud; and then felt that he was riding into a sack. In the home the two boys worked silently. Da Ponte seldom left the studio. He changed Il Greco's work continually and always scolded him. Francesco was like a hunted thing. He trembled when his father spoke his name. He had become the man who was to jump in terror from the upper window of his house, because he heard some one knocking at the outside door. They sat around the fire winter nights and seldom spoke, or—when they did—each sentence floated lonesomely and never took an answer by the hand.

Il Greco hid the letter that came from Clovio, but read it every night, until the feeling of the parchment on his chest was like Clovio's hand, and the words beat constantly inside his ears: *"I did not intend that you should stay in Bassano all your life. I would not have bothered with a person who was going to do the easy thing. I shall be in Venice at the end of this year. . . ."*

The year was drawing towards its close. To Greco the dark days began to symbolize his soul as they closed

over the small lights of the town. The heavy winter rain flooded the atmosphere and there was no sound of happiness—only Francesco complaining of the way his father held him to his work, and Maria mocking her brother while she preened herself. Jacopo stood over Greco, supervising every line, watching more closely than he had done even in the first years that Greco came. Every time the heavy finger blotted out a form Il Greco winced. Interrupting each instruction was Clovio's, "*I did not intend that you should stay in Bassano all your life.*"

The year grew dark. The days rolled by. Greco could not plan what he should do. Poor and isolated, with no friends but Bassano's friends, with his confidence shaken by the constant criticism, his energy sank, like sap in trees. It had been so long since he had been allowed to work alone that, when he thought of painting, he was confused. There were no more moments of elation. He only felt that he had been a fool to have ridden back from Venice with money in his purse. He remembered the long road, with bare trees on the sides narrowing ahead of him like a net; and he had seen it, and ridden straight into the maw.

One sudden day the clouds recoiled and left a silver sky of icy sun. Jacopo saw it from his studio, saw the long cats slinking through jet trees, heard the surprising call of winter birds, laid down his brush, and walked off silently. A little later came the singing of a flute and boisterous laughter. Soon Maria was standing in the door with a heavy wrap around her, whis-

pering, "Il Greco," motioning above the bent backs of her brothers. But she never saw more than the top of Greco's skull as he leaned over his blue-green paper, drawing with black stone, figures that did not satisfy him. The flute wandered from side to side among the trees, and Maria called: "Greco. Francesco will not tell, and father's busy setting up his dragons. Greco, let's take a run across the hills."

He scratched on quickly in short, nervous lines. The dogs began to bark. Greco was remembering that at first da Ponte said to look at nature. Now he told him to study his own work—he, who sent off a complacent, fat Madonna seated in the clouds, looking like the gardener's daughter nursing her child. He almost heard:

I did not intend that you should stay in Bassano all your life. . . . I shall be in Venice at the end of the year. . . . Now let them say that I don't paint my own pictures. . . . I should have known better than to take a Greek.

Maria stood over him. "Come on, Greco! That drawing is done. Come on! It looks just like father's. It's a glorious day."

A peasant screamed in terror. Bassano laughed and sent an imitation of her scream out on his flute. There were loud voices at talk. Maria pulled Il Greco's hair, pouting:

"Come on, I tell you!"

Francesco snapped: "You fool, stop pestering us! Get out of here!"

Across the sunshine and bare trees the flute began to make up a new tune. It took a phrase, changed it, repeated and changed again, then grew louder as it called back the first rendering of the phrase.

Maria sulked: "You silly! He's here now, and it's too late." She left the room.

The flute was coming closer; the slender stream cut a deeper channel of narrow sound that bit into Il Greco's nervous flesh. He looked at his drawing. It was going to satisfy the master, this plastic, solid Virgin visiting Saint Elizabeth. They might as well be peasants discussing hens. He knew by the trill, as the flute came near, that da Ponte was in the mood to praise. It hardly mattered. He dipped his brush in sepia and began to fill in the drawing.

Jacopo strode into the studio, glanced over the shoulders of his sons, then walked to Greco's table. His very clothes radiated the crispness of the air, and he carried good will with him. As he stood over Greco, his poise and presence seemed to apologize for the past dark, angry months, and gladly to accept his own frank apology with a gesture of full forgiveness, and let us begin fresh again. He said: "You'd better go out in the sunshine, lad. You've worked too hard, and these good days are rare. Besides"—his finger touched the drawing—"this work pleases me."

Il Greco saw the finger and bit his lip. He continued to shade a fold of drapery. Bassano stood above him and his words still filled the air. His hand was on the paper. Bad as the work might be, the satis-

faction of the master made it worse. The brush dipped into sepia again. It poised uncertainly above the page. It did not wish to touch a figure. Instead, it darted suddenly to the upper right-hand corner of the sheet and wrote in large, firm letters:

Nothing pleases me
Dec. 1, 1569

IV. In Titian's House

Clovio said, "Thus the boy Domenicos became the man known as Il Greco."

He paused, and Greco took up: "While you have not changed, to look at you, I should not think a single day had passed." Yet his eyes followed the deep creases of the frail white face, so dear to him he wished that he might give it all his strength and take its many years into himself.

"But naturally," Clovio answered. "I turned old suddenly at your age, when I was taken by the Spaniards in the sack of Rome, and saw so many horrors that, if I live to be a hundred, all my life will not be long enough to catch up with that day. Don't look at me with those asking eyes! This is no place to talk of Spain. I'll only say it was worse than anything barbarians ever did, and done by baptized Catholics. . . . I swore that if I ever should escape, I would become a monk, and did until a cardinal wished my services and a pope dissolved my vow. But we're in Italy. Why do I speak of Spain? It is so lovely here. Go on with your story."

They stood between the shops on the Rialto Bridge and watched the Grand Canal flow under them, carrying barques heaped high with vines and many-coloured fruits, wild boar and stags and other products of the

chase, beside the yield of farmyards and of fields. They saw the luscious foods piled on the shores, saw the bright blades of gondolas taking the reflections of the stream, and (as the long boats balanced to the slow, rhythmic motion of the gondoliers and the singing of the slaves) they saw the tall, silk forms of women within the shadows of the canopies, their long trains draped over stilted shoes with such high heels that many could walk only when they leaned on slaves. Huge gold or silver sleeves swelled from white elbows, and were caught by shining brooches just below the armpits onto heavily-embroidered robes that swung so low across the chests it was a wonder they did not fall off when the wearers stood. Throats, arms, and hands crisp with jewellery, they made a superb sight; and Clovio wanted to point out that the rich capes of silk, lined with sable or with ermine (an extravagance which the Council, in its endless, futile laws to limit wild expenses, had been made to yield because of the suffering of these ladies in winter months if they were allowed to cover themselves only with veils)—that these soft, warm, lovely capes were thrown back on the cushions by the gallant girls, who knew that they were more lovely when they bowed to dandies in passing gondolas, if, even set in frosty atmosphere, they had their necks and shoulders bare. He wanted to point out, as she passed, Veronique Franco, the greatest of the courtesans, draped with fine lace made in convents, and, to the scandal of the city, veiled in the white reserved for virgins. He wished to speak of

her tragic face, to tell that often now she was said to turn from a lover, screaming that she would leave the world and all its pigs, and enter a nunnery. It seemed a melancholy madness ate at her ever since the will of a young noble accused excesses with her of his death, and left her his soft feather-bed, saying she had great need of it, but on condition that she should neither sell, nor pawn, nor give it to the Jews. Her barque passed, with many pivoting towards it as it went, and Clovio did not speak. Rather, he looked at the young face as Greco talked, and saw the solemn, slender profile dark against the gleaming water, while the serious voice spoke through the constant ripple and the song that rose from all around them, mingled with the lusty market cries.

Strange, detached Il Greco, imposed on this place. . . . Clovio remembered he had said, "We are in Italy," and thought that Greco would never be of any land. A great pity came over him for the lonely boy (slim figure, bright wavy hair, intense dark eyes), and he felt the deepest love he had ever known, and wondered how he might use it best.

Il Greco ended, saying: "Bassano was furious. You needn't give me credit for making up my mind. I had to go."

Clovio looked away to hide the glitter of his eyes. "I said Domenicos became the man, and yet I find him as I did before, on the Rialto, wandering by himself, with the racket of a quarrel back of him, and thinking that he knows just how to paint. One thing Bassano

might have taught you, and you did not learn. That is the love of life around you. Here you stand above a stream that flows with all of beauty, all of wealth. What do you see?"

Greco would have answered that the shadows and reflections gave strange forms that made the outlines of the boats flow into one another, that made the long, draped limbs of ladies ripple into waves, and even the merchants walking on the shore . . . but as he looked down on the market-place and saw, between the business men, the rows of little booths where painters sat waiting in the midst of their pathetic wares, he was afraid, remembering, foreseeing: Il Greco who has been parodied in plays is only the same Domenicos. Clovio's white face was hidden in his hand, and Greco boasted to the square-chopped beard: "Even if I did leave with a row, it was not against my drawing. I saw da Ponte finish it, putting in the white lines of high lights before I left. I suppose I even could have stayed, as far as he was concerned."

Clovio laughed. He did love this boy with long, eager features, curved line of lips, and drawn nerves and muscles as taut as a viol's strings that made mysterious music inside of the strange being.

"There goes Tintoretto!" He interrupted his own thought. "How well he is named Robusti!"

All the strength of Venice seemed concentrated in the man who walked by with a ten-year-old child, a youngster who seemed a pin-wheel of flying feet and

hands as it strode forward, bending backwards to gaze up adoringly.

"Who's the boy with him?"

"The boy . . . is Marietta, Tintoretto's daughter, known throughout the city as The Kid. He takes her everywhere dressed like that, and it makes the mother furious. But they don't mind. They worship one another. She plays beautifully on curious musical instruments that he invents for her, and besides, the little thing shows a lot of love and talent for painting."

"She took me through his studio," Greco said, "a bare, dark room where he can work only by artificial light. There were statues set on scaffolding that she said he uses for models, uses them and corpses, seldom living people. He had two Titian paintings and his famous sign scrawled across the wall, *Titian's colour, Michel Angelo's drawing*, and she said he never hires helpers. I wondered who she was. Thought it was a boy, she seemed so sure a little kid, intelligent and kind. I couldn't even get inside of Titian's gate."

"How did you happen to try?"

"Looking for work. I am up against it."

"But how long have you been here?"

"About a month."

Clovio stared at him. So he had had again that lonely time of tramping from one studio to another, and in the black of winter too. Clovio said: "Titian's apprentices are jealous. Not only that—they've surrounded their master with a certain care and protection, since the world he knew has grown so old. All of his

intimate friends have died, Venice has been losing power, and the effect on him shows in the sombreness that has come into his late work. They let the least possible number of people approach him. So, as it's almost a necessity to have worked for Titian to get on, I took it for granted you'd be glad to have me arrange with him to give you a trial. It was easier than I expected it would be, because, although the master has never been known to teach, it seems that he needs some one now. There's always been that fight with Tintoretto, and lately Titian's been dissatisfied with the helpers that he has. I spoke about your work with Bassano, and there again was luck in that he has some spite against the man for having made as perfect a copy of Titian's last self-portrait as he could, and set it as a money-lender in the Purification of the Temple. It is just possible that you will be his first real pupil, outside of his son."

Then Clovio saw that Greco did not hear. He had turned on him a face wild with astonished joy. He could not speak his gratitude, and hardly knew that he babbled: "Titian, the immortal, the blessed. And I shall see him working. I shall see him turn a perfect canvas from the wall, stand before it as before his mortal enemy, find a fault that only he could find, and, taking his brush up as a surgeon would his knife, slash it open with so merciless a courage that I shall have to turn away or faint—while his colours build more solidly than marble underneath a sculptor's hand, and he works on in fury, throwing his brushes from

him, using his fingers and his sleeves until the thing that had been perfect nature has become perfect art; and still he is not satisfied, although he is white and breathless, and the colour that left his cheeks and the breath that left his lungs have gone into his painting; but he only turns the canvas once more to the wall, saying that the singer who improvises never sings a well-adjusted song; and I shall witness that!"

There were many things that Clovio wished to say, beginning that it was long ago when the younger Palma described Titian at work; but he did not speak, because he knew it is as useless to talk to burning stars as to black night, and saw that Greco was as closed within himself with joy as he had been with pain.

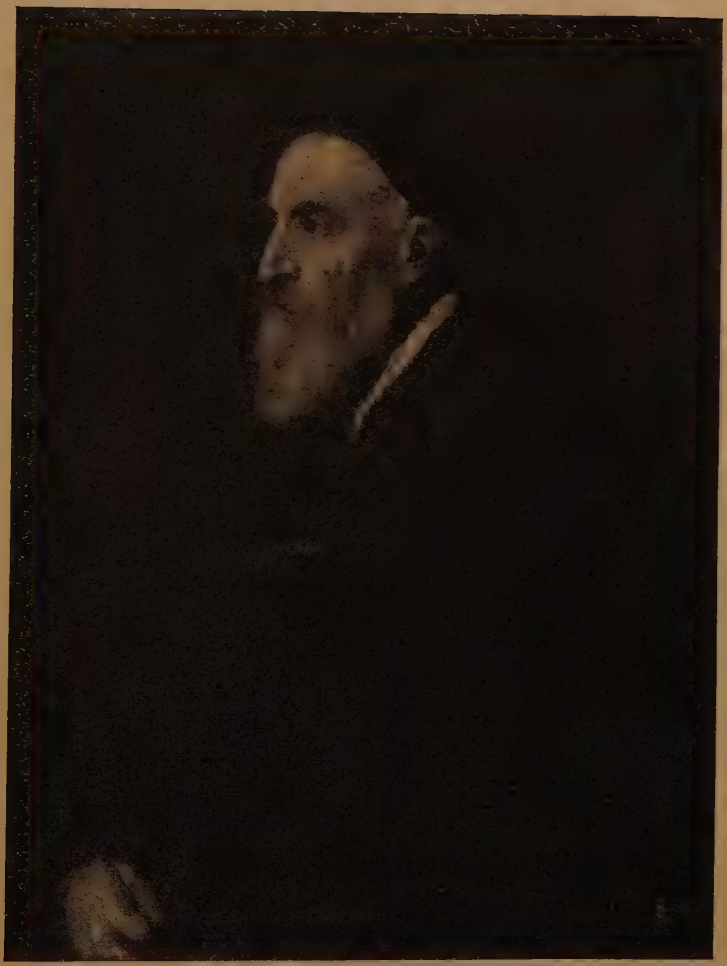
The singing people fell from sight to become a unity of singing air as Greco left the white, paved street and walked into the garden of Titian's home. It was the landscape of Bassano made into song, lyrical in the grouping of its trees of varied green, and in the way its trained streams wound among flowers that were perfect by their sides (lilies with their ivory roots bathing in clear waters, hills that rose exactly where they should), while in the distance the mountains of Cadore watched their great son's home.

He had never dreamed of anything so magnificent as the inside of the house. Soft light filtered through tall windows made of thick round pieces of dull glass.

It glittered across the glowing floors of polished Oriental stones, to rise on walls hung solidly with rich brocades from Spain, where new and antique sculpture was set in niches edged with twisted columns. Then the light grew brilliant as it arched along the silver ceilings garlanded with gold. His eyes held back, while his heart beat on and carried a body that seemed a crystal vase, to follow the servant towards the master. —through rooms and corridors hung with carved gold, incrusted with rich paintings; through the long, frescoed studio, where curious, unfriendly eyes glared up from grinding colours, from mixing oil with colours, from preparing canvases, from making copies of Titian's work, from working on a canvas, from working on a drawing—angry eyes of many students furious to see another come among them, cold resentment as they saw the servant opening the door that showed him into Titian's private studio.

It seemed another door was opened and was closed as Greco entered, and that there stayed about the room a memory of musk and ambergris; but it was before the tall, west window that Titian sat with the broad sea behind him, and the little citied islands with their towers and campaniles gilded by the late afternoon, which turned the gold-lined, purple waves so sparkling and so bright, that he could only see in silhouette the skull-cap, the high forehead, the long aquiline nose, and the white cloud of beard; and he had to keep repeating to himself, "I stand before the master."

A full voice spoke out of the shadowed form, and



Titian: Self-portrait

1570

gradually, as he answered (whether it was that he became accustomed to the light, or whether the afterglow turned dim, he did not know, but rather thought it was the latter because of the layers of coldness that fell over him like descending strata of the night), his eyes began to find the face and features. His ears could not remember what they heard, nor his mouth remember what it uttered while the scene dissolved into a background for the master's ashen head that lay about the burning embers of his eyes. It was a fragile body beneath the heavy cloak, and the hands upon his lap were stiff with age, but without the restfulness of age, such tired hands one wondered how they could hold a brush, and Greco found that he was thinking of hands nailed to a cross.

It was of those hands that Titian spoke, looking on them pityingly. "Friends are dead, wife, sister, daughter dead, and my only trusted workman has grown old." His left hand touched the hard veins of his right. "My son Pomponio has never cared for anything. My son Orazio has turned from art to alchemy. If he does succeed, it will be fine. Think of changing sand to gold! And yet I am sorry in a way. There would be gold enough in painting if it brought the money that it should, and if we didn't have to sell our work outright like any common merchandise. Why, not to mention the artistic worth, just think of this: Giorgione and I did one Christ on the Cross that has already brought the priests more crowns in alms than both of us have earned in all our lives! Besides, there's

something still more about painting that makes me sorry Orazio has changed. Yet, if he could make gold out of sand. . . . But I'm wandering in my talk. It's the hour. Turn that canvas from the wall—the large one. There."

He sat in contemplation of his work, while Greco stared at it. He was shocked by the tragic aspect of the Pietà, for it was old—great trembling forms, as far from the strong beauty of his lyric art as the Titian he had dreamed of was from this decrepit man.

"It's only begun," the master said. "It's a thing that few will like and that I'll never sell. I'm doing it to have placed over my tomb. Oh, but it's far from finished. I intend to work on it years and years. Is it hard for you to see it? Vasari writes that I do my work roughly now, in big strokes and daubs, and that it has to be seen from across the room. He forgets that they have always said the same thing of me, and then—although he sees that while the way I paint looks easy, it requires infinite skill and care, infinite retouching, and that it's only by long labour it gets the deceiving look of being quickly done that turns my imitators into clumsy fools—still he goes on to say that I should paint only for my own pleasure now, and not show my latest canvases lest they harm my reputation. That makes him an idiot, too, a parrot without courage. These hands, even these eyes, have done so much and seen so much they are impatient over details. That's why I've taken you. Show me your hands. They're young and supple. I've been told that they can do

tiny work or very big things. O my God! they're young! You can't be much older than Tintoretto was when he first came to me, and he is at the age that I was then. He is a stubborn man. I saw that in his first drawings and sent him home. Now he is at his height, and I am tired. I need some young, strong hands. But they tell me you are stubborn, too. Are you?"

Greco knelt before him. "Titian is the greatest painter in the world, and Greco's only wish is to be as Titian's hands." He pitied the shrunken legs that made quivering ridges in the rich cloth before him as he knelt.

Titian gazed with pleasure at the red glints in Greco's hair. He set his hands into the soft, thick stuff, and turned the pale, slender face towards him.

"I wish you were a stronger person than you are. An artist is a workman, understand; and Tintoretto is a giant. Still, there is something in your face that I like, and you are young and you've been able to forget Byzantine work. It's very good to be young and able to forget. These students that I have, they all are bad. They did a little on some canvases that were sent to Brescia last year, and did it so abominably that the pictures were refused. They had ruined my work, and it was all Orazio could do to collect half the contract price. If he can turn sand into gold, that will be beautiful. What are my little trades in lumber and antiques compared with that? My 'huge estates' that people talk about are only cottages. My farms never

yield. The pensions promised by princes are not paid. But you . . . you! You must put your mind away and be my hands for a while. I think you can. I noticed a change in Bassano's painting while you worked for him. The change was good. But that was for Bassano—not for me. You understand?"

"I understand."

"I think you do. Besides, you have such supple hands.

"Were you here when they celebrated the battle of Lepanto? You would have thought the sea on fire. Every square and every island blazed. They had brought over thirty chariot loads of wood to the Piazza San Marco to burn along with the boats that carried it. The pile rose higher than the Doge's Palace, and when it was lighted the whole sky flamed. The crowd was so thick, in every sort of barque, that many of the gondolas overturned, and half of the nobility would have drowned had they not been hauled back squirming like nets full of fish. The significance of the thing they celebrated was that the battle proved Venice is not too old. The Turks had been chipping our possessions off, wearing us away, until it seemed the city's glory had been ended; then she joined the pope and young Spain, and brushed the heathens off. Now the event will be commemorated by a canvas which is to be done by Tintoretto, or by me, and I must be given the award, because I am Venice. Only my hands are so old, it is hard for them to end a painting. But if we join my spirit and your young fingers. . . . See?

That is what I want of you. Your hands to be mine as long as I am here, and after that you will have learned. I can't go on another generation, and I can't see Tintoretto take the field. Let me touch your hands again. They're warm and smooth and straight. . . .

"That other door. First turn the canvas back against the wall, and then go out that other door quickly, and down one flight of stairs, and in the hall you'll probably find somebody to show you your room. I'm tired. Besides, this is the hour my friends used to come, and at this time I do not care to hear the living talk."

When he closed the door behind him, Greco's mind began to reconstruct the scene. There was the full voice and the spirit of the fighter. He thought the Pietà might have been clouded by the evening atmosphere and, remembering the sweep of Titian's earlier art, the frailness of the master seemed the shadow of the night. He thought of him standing before his canvas like a stone-mason with a mallet raised to strike. Instead of the dry white form of Titian lusting for his hands, it seemed the robust Tintoretto was there; but Tintoretto was the enemy, and it was against him that he must match himself, while Titian . . . Titian's face was not before him any more, only the indomitable spirit of the man who would not die.

He walked down the hallway, murmuring: "Titian,

Titian!" trying to imagine his lyric youth, until gradually he realized that a voice was in his ears singing high and clearly, like the far days of the master breaking through the mist of time in answer to his thought. Surely it was that, for ideas often came to him as sound before they turned to colour; and such clear, care-free singing could not exist in the home that held the sunset studio and the painting for the altar of a tomb. The voice was young, and soft for love, singing high and alone, lilting through the quiet night until a clang of sound resounded from a struck lyre—one rich chord —and then again the voice alone, or rather now the voice encased in musk and ambergris. Then through the solid fragrance the words began to come:

"What harm if I am ugly?
[Thrrrum]
And why should I care?
My lover is the artist
Who can picture me most fair.
[Thrrrum, thrrum, thrrum, thrrum]
I do not mind my lack of beauty."

Beyond the open door, an oval crystal mirror held a face and naked chest within the silvery surface formed by garlands of spun glass. The young girl's fingers touched the rouge-pot. They reddened the upturned points of firm, young breasts that could not have been round many years. While her large eyes saw her beauty in the glass, her left hand struck a chord upon the lyre that lay across her dressing-table among strings

of jewellery, pots of cosmetics, and a mirror made of gold. Then her hands drew the pearl-embossed cape over her shoulders, and rose to pull a long pin from her head. Her heavy hair uncoiled and spread. Il Greco saw her rub its length with orange peel, but there were not the ashes, nor egg-shells, nor sulphur, nor other nasty things used then as dye, because this eighteen-year-old girl was naturally blond.

Framed by the young disorder of the brocade room, she sang and brushed her hair, and sprinkled perfume in it. Musical instruments lay upon the chairs, with heavily-embroidered clothes and feather fans, and by her side were the ridiculous shoes set on pedestals built over a foot high to raise Venetian women far above the ground, and lengthen them like goddesses, provided they were clever enough to walk. She wove her liquid hair with strings of pearls, arranged it on her head like jewelled horns, and in her right hand raised the golden mirror, and with her left hand struck again the lyre.

"Jinny, why do you keep standing there?" she called. "Bring me my cloak!"

Il Greco spoke a word, and at his voice she turned. Her startled face stared motionless, while her fingers swiftly moved to buckle the lace bodice over her painted breasts. She set her bare feet into her high shoes, rose majestically to the tremendous height they gave to the tall woman, and walked easily and gracefully towards him.

"I am Signorina Irene de Spelimbourg, a pupil of Titian."

"I am Il Greco. I was looking for my room."

"Greco? I had heard that you were coming to this house, but I forgot, and thought it was my maid behind me."

She held out her hand, and when he stooped to kiss it he saw that, although her finger nails were tinted and the skin was covered with unguents to keep it white, there were patches of oil-paint here and there, and he kissed the fingers with more pleasure, while she looked down on the deep curls of his hair, the straight, slender shoulders, then into the sudden nudeness of his eyes as he looked up and saw her watching him. They gazed at one another, then laughed the laughter of youth in the house of old age, clear and full, but frightened and still, as footsteps marked time through the laughter.

"Here's my maid. She will show you your room."

Irene closed her door and sat again before the silver of her crystal mirror within the flowered garlands of spun glass. Her full, thick lips curled from her teeth as she let her long hair uncoil again. She smiled to see the golden background that it made. She unfastened the buckle of her lace and saw her painted breasts once more, laid her hands on her white shoulders, laughed, and played the lyre to her laughter, but did not sing.

"Soft lips of youth"—the words came to her brain. "The bend of a back that will straighten. A frown

that will swiftly smile. [Thrrum, Thrrum.] Or shoulders bent forever. Eyes filled with the past, and yet the greatest master, and the greatest spirit, and the greatest soul. Irene de Spelimbourg, you are of noble birth, so what if you are lovely, and if his face is fair? The girl who washes dishes could see that much. Fasten your dress again. Put up your hair."

Deep in the Venetian mirror the proud face heaped its gold hair high. Silver on the silver glass was engraved the kneeling unicorn. White fingers twined white pearls in glowing hair, and set pearl and ruby rings onto themselves, and pearl and ruby bracelets stiffened the round arms. She stared into the mirror. The mirror, staring back, told her she was beautiful and young.

"Love is the desire for beauty. Beauty is repose in love. This I have been taught, and, when I see that I am beautiful, what more can I care?"

Her eyes watched her own beauty, and a feeling of great comfort came, and courage—for when one is lovely and is young, there can not be pain or wrong. "Beauty in itself is love, and beauty's self am I."

The soft of her fingers touched the lyre, caressing one by one its seven strings.

Alone in his room, Il Greco took up the mirror of polished steel and, gazing at his face, spoke to her memory. "Irene de Spelimbourg, we are both his creatures."

His eyes sought his own eyes for her reply, and

while he waited the music of her lyre rippled down the hall with her proud voice above it:

"Since beauty is all love,
I shall not give
Except to my great Love
Who makes my beauty live."

There were four long, bitter weeks when no one spoke to him with friendliness. The other apprentices glared as he went about his work, and he expected them to play disagreeable tricks on him, but even that did not happen. Irene de Spelimbourg moved in her tall pride, towering above him. There was never again the accident of the open door or of a burst of laughter, and Greco began to realize that nothing had passed between them. Only her perfect dignity had seemed kind. Then, when he remembered the determined loyalty with which he had said, "We are both his creatures," he was as much ashamed as though he had spoken the words into her eyes. There had been no temptation, no opportunity to renounce, and he saw that he was no more to her than he had been to that Fioretta of Crete, and wondered if all his life he was to be shaken by women's careless beauty.

Irene painted chiefly in the master's studio, bending quietly over a small canvas. Sometimes she hummed softly like a nesting bird, and Titian seemed to love to have her near his hand. She had a feminine sensi-

tiveness of colour, and a slight fineness of design, but her work was like embroidery with no importance to it, except for the flush of her cheeks, and the throbbing of her throat, and the mysterious expressions that crossed her face. Then Titian did his finest work, and when she looked up and saw the rush of paint, her parted lips seemed to sing:

"My lover is the artist
Who can picture me most fair."

They seemed to Greco very far away, those two, huge and distinct above him, and yet distant, while Titian's work was near. He touched it. It was dim, but it was near him and he handled it. His brush was perfectly obedient to the master's wish. It moved as part of the master's hand, and Greco worked without praise or blame, as a non-existent thing, watching the others.

Irene's round young face glowed to the praise of the old man's brush, and Greco asked himself: "Why not? There is that vigour, and there is that strength." Still it hurt him to see the burned-out form, like the white shell of a dead spider, beside the vivid girl.

"Pick up my brushes," Titian said. "An emperor has done as much. Great Charles the Fifth bent down . . ." He mumbled on, speaking of far days, distant, distinct, and glowing, while the canvas that he painted seemed clouded but was near. "And the emperor called me 'the Elect of the Century,' and allowed no

one else to portray him, lest his glory should be ruined by an awkward brush. . . ."

And Greco thought: "There is no greater love than that which he can give—no greater expression than his art." His small brush brought Titian's instructions into life. His finger rubbed a spot as Titian said, and Irene's voice throbbed through the studio. The two were great, and tall, and distant, and the near canvas blurred.

"For Titian creates beauty in the beautiful; and what else is the dream of love?"

That was her song, that was her talk, that was the whole wisdom of the age; and Greco, as only a muscle of Titian's arm, felt small and alone and less than man. He did not dare to go to Clovio with nothing other than that to say, not even knowing if he satisfied, while no one spoke to him except to give an order.

"Bring me more colours," Titian said, and Greco went into the other studio, where some one handed him the jars of paint sullenly, without a word. He remembered Irene, tall behind him as he walked away, and he saw Irene standing by the window, tall, tall, watching him come back. But if he had thought for an instant that she had looked at him, he saw her turn quickly and smile above, beyond him to the master, whose long, thin, bare arm rose like a birch from the sleeve that fell back on his shoulder, and his brush, high above his head, worked surely on in spite of his rheumatic fingers. Irene watched him proudly, with eyes that seemed to say her grandmother, who had

known him in Augsburg at the emperor's court, had taught her daughter's daughter that no woman could boast a finer thing than Titian's love.

Then, one day when Greco asked a small apprentice for the paint, Gerolamo called him. Greco turned and faced the little man grown so old in Titian's service that his last name had been forgotten, and he was only Titian's Gerolamo.

"Unfortunately, it is definite now that you are going to stay."

Cold joy swelled inside of Greco's head. Then he had satisfied the Titian. Then he was accepted. He almost thanked the old workman for his hard, dry words:

"You understand, I'm sorry. I have been Titian's servant all my life, his valet and his helper, and I love the man. Look here, boy, you're staying, so you'll have to know, but swear to secrecy. What does a Greek swear by? Well, if you are a Greek, you're a painter, too, so swear secrecy by the sight of your eyes and the use of your hands. Swear!"

The little man stood trembling before him. There was no flesh to pad the veins between his skull and skin. At first Greco had smiled at his fury. It was funny to him, he was so glad to know that he had been accepted, but when he saw the way the blue veins throbbed beneath the yellow hide, he was afraid the frail creature would burst; so he swore with mock solemnity.

"Swear without a smile," the old man said, "because if you break your oath I'll dig your eyes out myself!"

This time, in seriousness, Il Greco swore.

"Then you must know the colours are kept like this, and when he sends you out to get them, remember, if it is for a new canvas, take them from the right-hand side of the shelf; but if he wants to repaint an early picture, as he often does, take them from the left. Remember, you have sworn by your hands and eyes. Then listen," and he whispered: "The colours on the left are mixed with olive oil and will never dry. It is a sacrilege, but when he changes his first work, the change must be wiped off. You understand, we love and we revere the man, and although he's old, he still is great. You understand—I am his slave. I have nothing outside of him, no other loyalty excepting to his art. But even he must not destroy those painted poems that he made when he was young. Answer me. Do you . . ."

"I understand," Il Greco said. He took a pot of red, a pot of blue, down from the left side of the cabinet and walked into the studio.

Irene looked once at Greco's eyes, saw the knowledge she had dreaded, and turned quickly to her work. Although she painted fast, her face stayed white. Her tall form curved and quivered from the hem of her long dress up to her golden head. While Greco watched, she bent her face further and further away. Her profile disappeared. She could not see her work,

but painted on, and Greco knew she was ashamed, humiliated for the weakness of her love.

Titian called down from the scaffold, "What are you waiting for?"

Greco gave the paints to him, thinking, "They are mixed with olive oil."

The old man's brushes made the sombre tint. The old man's eyes studied the canvas hard. "See if you can do the little leaves in there."

Il Greco worked, thinking, "The small apprentices will wipe all this away."

Titian snatched the brush out of his hand and began to paint with sure, quick strokes. He made the distant hills turn dark with coming night. The trees were broken by a storm, the little animals became afraid. Titian's thin cheeks glowed. His thin hand trembled only when it was free. His breath came fast and rasping.

Greco stood tall and straight above the bending form, thinking, "They are mixed with olive oil," sobbing deeply in his heart, "He does not know. He labours and he pants impotently. No life from all this energy, this passion, and this trembling."

There was no sound, and yet he thought he had heard Irene cry out, and saw her bending low, with her brush motionless, stopped in a formless spot of paint. She sat trembling, almost underneath his hand, helpless and ashamed that now he knew. Underneath his two hands, both of them helpless, and the picture olive oil. His muscles hardened and they stretched.

He felt himself growing tall, rising tremendously above the old man's ignorance, the young girl's shame. His arms of their own nervousness shot above his head. His hands cupped outwards with the wrists together, and it was all he could do to keep from shouting: "I. I am the only strength, the only man. The rest is olive oil."

Did Irene sob? He looked. Titian had not seen his gesture, and Irene was scrubbing out her work with turpentine.

The two were near him now, but tiny, bright, and trembling. Only the canvas was far away, a distant thing of youth, an ephemeral thing of olive oil. He was enormous, real, and vital above these two who had seemed all an hour ago. Now he stood over them, and owned them, owned their secret, owned their strength.

Titian laid down his palette. "Help me from the scaffolding."

He was exhausted with his effort, and while he leaned his weight on Greco, he looked at least his ninety years. He stood beside Irene. She rose. His thin hand pressed her down.

"Go on. Repaint it. Or else don't. There's still an hour of working light." He kissed the ivory column of her neck. "No, I don't want anyone to come with me."

Irene did not cry until she was alone, rolling on her bed, tangled in her hair. "It takes such a little while

to let in shame, such a little while for all dignity to go!"

Then she stuffed her golden braids into her mouth so that he would not hear if he were passing or if he stood by her door. He should not know her with her robe ripped from her breasts and her feet bare. He should know her only as she had looked at him with her eyes aching, wide, sparkling but dry. He should remember how she rose as soon as the shuffling steps were silenced by the closing door, stood with her head as high as his, and said: "It does not matter. A stubbornness of stupid people that I cannot stop. It only shows what everybody knows—Titian is old. Even so, look at that picture! It is easy enough to say that it is done with salad oil, but there is no one who can equal it, except Tintoretto. You and I, we stand here knowing. . . ." She spread her hand and moved it with a gesture of wiping out. "But what are we worth? Look at the daub that I left. And you—you work, knowing it is olive oil. You work without his madness or his faith; and you do nothing, anyway, but polish what he leaves, take him and polish him with little strokes, and never reach the finish of his early art; and never touch his colour even now. Look at that colour glow! Ah, wait until there's something you can give before you have the right to laugh, and then you won't! You'll know too much."

She had turned and walked away majestically. She did not pause when she heard him speak her name; nor hesitate when he hurried after her; nor even wait for

him to open the door, because she could not speak another word, nor bear the very youngness of his face.

While Irene smothered herself in the pillows of her bed, writhing and sobbing, netted in her hair, Il Greco stood and gazed at the master's work. Titian had painted beautifully that day, with a rush of his early vigour, and with his lyricism only deepened by his age, so that the splendid nude he had done in his youth glowed with more splendour against the long, dark vista of his tragic years. And it was done with olive oil. It could not stay.

Irene de Spelimbourg, locked in her room, beat at the alabaster idol of herself, moaning and ashamed, the more ashamed because of her rich beauty. She cried, and gagged her cry with her gold hair. Her teeth bit through the long braids in her mouth. They grated on the chains of precious stones. The strings broke. The jewels rolled across the floor. Irene reared her head in terror, lest in passing he should hear the sound, throw open her door, and come in, saying, "I thought it was my room."

And while the noble Irene became an eighteen-year-old girl, Il Greco became a man inside himself, studying the painting. He recognized its beauty and its feebleness, all the glory of a tremendous past reviewed with the sombre strokes of age; and even in that age was something great, and it was Titian's, only Titian's, like the girl, his own possession; Titian's, because he had created it. For all others, it would be wiped away. Irene was right. There was nothing he could ever add

to this, except a polish which would be decadence. The work was done forever, and by Titian. It was Titian's self, and hardly more to Greco then than it would be to artists centuries to come. If he was to add, it must be with the strength of a younger man and of a newer age, a tortured strength that dragged itself out of an uncreated soil, not copying. He must bring something more than mechanical work of hands, unless Irene was to be justified in her high scorn. His thought took the form of Tintoretto, the story of how Tintoretto had been driven from the master's house, had not been taught, and therefore was the only one who had touched Titian in his childhood and still become an artist.

Now Tintoretto was the enemy, and Titian had to win, and Greco had to help him, but could not with anything that he could get from Titian, except the spirit, and the words, and his reverence for the man. He set his fingers into the marks Titian's feet had left on the scaffolding, and closed his eyes against his arm. This was a fight of giants, and he was a slender lad that fate had set between them. He could not help his master unless he went to Tintoretto, unless he stood before the newly decorated walls of the Scuola San Rocco, faced those paintings made of fire and ice, and absorbed their strength. He had to know the adversary who added to *Titian's colour, Michel Angelo's drawing,* then see what Greco could give that Irene should not despise him. Irene? No. Life, or more than life—himself.

Irene de Spelimbourg, alone in her room, was terrified by the way her body spun within her skin, spiralling endlessly. She did not know the thing that turned within her, that wanted to be raised, and held, and carried like a banner. She lay face down on her bed, and burned in quivering stillness while she thought that she heard footsteps going by, and wondered when he would burst in on her, ridiculously looking for his room. Then she would be through with dignity. Then he would console her, and it would not be her fault, whatever happened. She wanted to be taken outside of her will to a soft, easy country. She wanted life to pick her up and carry her away, she was so tired of walking in tall shoes above the earth. She thought she heard him coming and did not stifle one deep cry. She let her lute fall off her bed, waited with her long neck crested backwards, her mouth open, and her eyes stared at the ceiling.

While Il Greco looked ever deeper into Titian's art, remembering her wisdom. How easy it would be for him to laugh at olive oil, but with a laughter that would break his being; and how impossible it would be to add to, or even touch the work, except under instruction. He looked at a small sketch Titian had made for his project of the battle of Lepanto. This was to grow into such a living thing that when men would see it they would think it nature, and the only way it could be done. But the sketch had no existence, and there was only colour to make it inevitable and triumphant—colour, and colour, and colour in the

hands of an old man and of a boy, matched against Tintoretto's full maturity.

He looked at his own hands, too white, too slender, and too frail, and he thought of the tremendous strength Tintoretto had taken, they said, from Michel Angelo. He wished that he could mould paint like a solid thing. He wished that he could hammer it like stone, and he gazed at his slender hands, thinking of the enemy.

Irene de Spelimbourg lay quiet now. Nothing was going to happen. Nothing came so easily. She would rest, then spread the unguents over her tortured face, paint it with the colour of young joy, step into her high shoes, and be the great lady again.

Greco went to the long halls of San Rocco, looked above the hard beds of the hospital at Tintoretto's work. How that man must have laughed when he painted there, but the kind of laughter Irene wanted, an overflow of vigour, an overflow of power! A brother stood beside him and told how Tintoretto had taken the commission in contest with all Venetian painters except Titian. He said that each had been told to make a sketch, but while the others laboured over little pads, Tintoretto found the exact measurements, did the complete painting for the oval, and set it in the ceiling. When it was shown, the others had cried out that it was not fair, so Tintoretto took it down, and would not give it back until the entire work of the Scuola had been assigned to him alone, at least fifty enormous panels.

As Greco did not smile at the anecdote, the brother walked away, thinking one minute that he had not heard, and the next that he was an unsociable, rude young man. Il Greco made a dream of Tintoretto. He saw him like a wild beast ravaging the city, gorging himself with walls, and yet more walls for his insatiable hands. How deeply he must have breathed as he swung his broad brush sideways, throwing in the figures, hurling back perspectives; he, head and shoulders above all other painters, having fought his way through every opposition, having always fought alone against the mob. Now the power of him was too great for anyone to bear. Over the groaning beds of sickness he had pictured the miraculous waters that cure; but they were too high for dying hands to reach, too much strength for young men, or even old.

Il Greco walked up the broad stairs and faced the chapel walls. Too magnificently human for the monotony of priests' dark chants, too richly was the fugue of colour wrought, too powerful the arm that had thrown the figures in confusion, but confusion built on power, turbulence within a perfect plan strong enough to contain the turmoil of this work; and it was as though Tintoretto reared his head above it all and laughed a trumpet call of victory. His arms, thrown open, dared any man to strike. This was the adversary. Greco hated his own slim hands. He thought of Titian with his rasping breath before this giant who, in the very excess of his power, offered them an answer.

He had painted Christ before Pilate, white and delicate, with His wrists crossed and His weak hands curled helplessly. Roman legions massed behind Him. Against straight columns of marble palaces stood the curved, white figure facing condemnation. Pilate washed his hands. Tintoretto had not laughed as he painted that, but had glorified such pity as Irene expressed in scorn, and Greco knew his only weapon was that spiritual force which made the Son of Man, looking on His death, greater than the brutal arms that bound Him.

Then, as though maddened by the admission he had made, in rage at having scorned his strength, Tintoretto lashed about himself a mill-pool of gigantic forms, the superhuman fury of the Crucifixion, women fainting at the foot of the cross where the Christ was stretched before an eclipsed sun, while outside of the light He spread surged the soldiers' careless power—drawn lines of legs, arms, cords that raised the supplice tree weighted with man.

Strength, too predestined and impersonal to call cruel, burst from Tintoretto once the work was planned. Force that did not know its enemy, power driven by its own vigour and necessity to act and to create (not seeing what it struck, nor able to care what it destroyed), had driven the irrepressible movement of his arm that beat of its own force, and struck again, again upon the wall (leaving its imprint of flaming life), that beat again, again because it must, until its flow would be exhausted, work. Then Tintoretto must have

raised his powerful, broad head, tossed his heavy mane, his white teeth gleaming between open lips, paint dripping from his outspread paws, and he must have more than laughed as he looked on his work with more than pride. He opened his enormous hand again, took up his brush, and, as signature, painted the portrait of himself upon the wall. Let anyone who dared take up the challenge of that face. For him, his head was reared and waiting for the only adversary who remained. He hungered for white Titian against whom he had not won.

Winter lost its grip on the lagoons. Winter sank under. The quail came back again, flying north across the Mediterranean, bearing spring in their heavy bellies. They gurgled over the waters, and Venice loved to see the low birds prick the bright canals with the tips of their short wings, and loved to sleep long sunny mornings to the call of these tired travellers.

In Titian's house there was no rest. Irene posed often for the master, who worked with the utmost atom of his strength on his canvas of the battle of Lepanto. Irene stood with her feet bare, in a pose of striding forward with a flag in her raised hand. She stood there motionless, until her body ached, and her lips went cold, and her brain was chilly with fatigue, and still she held the pose. One day she fainted and woke up lying across Titian's knees. Il Greco stood

behind them with a bowl of icy water, but turned and walked away while Titian spoke to her as to a little child, stroking her head and telling her she must speak when she was weary, she must not do that again; he did not want to wear her out, but that he forgot to think about her strength; and as he babbled over her, he called her names that came out of his youth—Violante, or Lavinia. Another time she did complain, but he begged: "Just a minute more. Please hold the pose." Later, when he slapped her hand to bring the blood back to it, she closed her eyes and lips, while the old man talked as to his daughter. Day after day he worked on the large canvas and, while she rested, painted horses churning through the sea. Greco stood by his hand, helping him. When the day's work was ended, Greco went away.

Irene wondered where he went. She thought it was to have some other woman rest him after the long day. She took up her lyre, but found no pleasure in her song, "My lover pictures me most fair," but only thought, "he must despise me—me and the old man." When she posed, she trembled because his eyes were on her. She quivered at being held immobile in his sight, and rested, not because she had to from fatigue. She shuddered that he should hear her called tenderly "sweet Violante," and that he should see the senile stroking of her arm. Her rose flesh shivered from the white touch of dried skin. Then Greco went away, not saying where, but Titian smiled as though he understood, and Irene was ashamed.

Day by day in secret Greco studied Tintoretto's work. He stood before the silver shadow of the Christ and tried to drink the spirit of its holiness. He stood before the stormy Crucifixion and tried to understand its strength. And day by day, with Tintoretto in his eyes, he stood beside old Titian at his work, heard his words, and caught his spirit, good and bad, most contagious in these years before his death, like a disease that is about to kill. He saw Irene as a noble girl, helpful and faithful by the master's side. He turned from the thrilling beauty of her form, telling himself: "It is too much that Titian has to fight a full maturity in art. I shall not make him fight with youth in his own home."

When Titian painted the round forms with joy in their voluptuous curves, Il Greco worried: "It is not that which will win. There must be the spiritual power of the Christ, the force of weakness." He tried to tell the master as he could, with a brush-stroke that Titian quickly obliterated; or he spoke a word whose meaning Titian did not hear, or did not care about.

He tried to tell Irene, so that she might hint it to the master. "Strength is in the spirit, not in the round flesh. Don't you see that is the only power, the only good?"

Irene thought he spoke of a different thing. She only saw the man before her. She only heard the man and woman in his talk, and thought he must despise her, for she had forgotten the words she spoke in scorn and only remembered the turmoil in herself,

and the agony she had hidden in her room. She could hardly stand before the young man and the old, nor was it any easier when Titian said, "There is a letter to be written."

He would dictate from his deep chair while Greco wrote, and Irene sat on a stool by his knee. The master's hand played over her, sometimes drew out a pin that let the golden column of her hair unroll—"Titian hair" the colour had been called, and she was Titian's thing. His white hand set her trembling and ashamed before Greco's round, young head, whose solemn eyes seldom looked on her, whose full curled lips never spoke her name.

"How he must despise me!" Irene felt while Titian dictated and Greco wrote, thinking: "How she must despise me, in my youth, to be nothing but the old man's tool." He wrote to Philip Second, Spanish King:

All my knowledge is consecrated to my Prince, and what painter from furthest antiquity can boast of such a lord? As long as he can use me, my limbs, broken with age, are his. . . .

"Philip" . . . Titian spoke in a different voice, and Greco stopped his pen. "Philip whom I knew as a boy in his father's court, whom I painted as a lad before he was a king, and the portrait that I did was sent to the English queen whom Philip wooed without a visit or a letter, but only loaned her the portrait, and that was enough. England hated him and hated Spain. The children played at burning him in effigy, they stuck

him like a pig in city streets, and often the little boy who acted the part of Philip in the game, was killed. It was not only children's games. Mary Tudor, the proud maiden queen, had to face the rebellion of the realm. She saw Wyatt's army march in a black mass towards her, and her advisers begged her to take refuge in the Tower, but she only laughed. She had the portrait of the Prince that I had done. It overwhelmed her boasted modesty, and the love it gave her, burning in her eyes, quelled the revolt and put England in the hands of Philip until Mary died. That is the Spanish king to whom I write. Read what you have written."

Greco read, "My limbs, broken with age, are his . . ."

. . . *and however great the burden under which my back is bent, it will be lightened by the thought that Titian only lives to serve His Majesty. I send him a Magdalen with tears in her eyes* . . .

Irene shuddered. She had posed for it.

. . . *in supplication for the payment of Philip's most devoted slave, and beg to remind him that the pictures I have sent him in the last twenty years have not been paid for. There are thirty of them: "Venus and Adonis," "Europa," "Callista," "Acteon," "Christ before Pilate," "The Entombment of the Lord,"* . . . (Get the full list from Gerolamo.) . . . *Moreover, very soon Titian will send Philip a "Last Supper" on which he has worked six years. It is the most fatiguing*

and important work that he has ever had the honour to execute for His Majesty, and for the labour he would like to draw a little consolation, in some fruit from the treaty of grain from Naples, conceded many years ago by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, of glorious memory. I am ninety-nine years old . . .

"Don't write this: He tried to marry Queen Elizabeth after Mary died, but he courted her with his own fine face and figure the way his parents made him, and was refused. Still, they think they flatter me by saying my paintings look like nature. I sometimes feel as though I had married the English queen myself. There was no pleasure in the wedding with Bloody Mary when Philip took her, old and ill. He ought to leave his love-affairs to me. That *débâcle* with Elizabeth probably will bring about some heavy fighting yet. . . . You can append the usual laudatory salutation and bring the letter to me to sign."

(A more effective letter went from the Spanish ambassador to his king, reporting: "Old as Titian is, he works, and still can work, and will do a lot more if he sees money in it. He is the most sly and avaricious person in the world, and will do anything for money. Yet it is a fact that he is old, and if His Majesty wants more pictures by his hand, it would be advisable to see to it at once, for, according to those who know him well, it seems he is really over ninety, although he does not show that much.")

Letter followed letter, Titian's words in Greco's

hand, an endless string of letters that made Irene recoil from the very gold of her hair, Titian hair—she, Titian's thing—while Titian schemed for money to hang new silks in his halls, to hang new jewels on her neck, and dictated letter after letter that made Greco writhe with hatred of rich, young, careless Spain, and pity for the artist; that sharpened him in bitterness, and in admiration for the girl who gave her full youth to the old man, and never glanced with other than pride and dignity at his own young, not-ugly face.

. . . was knighted by His Majesty's blessed father, Charles the Fifth, and wishes to be able to uphold the rank so honoured in the world, in order both that everyone may know. . . .

While Greco wrote, Titian kissed the pearls in Irene's hair. He turned her smooth face up to him. His pale eyes played over her rich features, and he continued with a lover's smile.

Otherwise he does not know how he will find the means to drag his afflicted body, entirely devoted to the service of the King, through the poverty of his last days. . . .

Spring thickened in its beauty. Crisp yellow leaves spread green. Then all the tortured bursting of the branches was forgotten, and the agony of hidden gardens, torn open by the year, mellowed into summer.

Irene still posed, and still she trembled before the dark glance of Greco, until Titian's voice said: "You are tired, child. Don't overdo it. You are too brave, and then you faint. It frightens me. I have seen so much death. I'm too strong for you." He looked at Greco. "Perhaps for you, too. Youth isn't what it used to be, and I sometimes forget that you are only children. Look, it's summer, and the theatre is here. I wonder if you even saw the comedians and charlatans arrive, rattling full-blown cows' bladders on sticks, beating drums, singing, dancing, and the rest. Flaminia is playing. I would like Irene to see her. They are to act inside the theatre, so perhaps she might go, if you would protect her, Greco. You can stay away from your inamorata for this once. You'd better, anyhow. You're getting hollows underneath the eyes. You are not the man I used to be, or I wouldn't trust you with Irene, no matter how much you seem to be in love."

The long, dim tunnel of the summer night was sweet with Irene's fragrance, musk and ambergris, as she reclined beside Il Greco, cloaked in a domino, and a double mask to hide her face. A rigid mask circled her brow, cheeks, and chin, and heavy lace was drawn over nose, mouth, and eyes. The stars swung down around them with the motion of the gondolier, then the water lapped up where the stars had been, and a late bird flying by them brushed the shell with its stiff wing. Irene's maid lay at their feet, cloaked and

masked like her mistress. The moon spread its gold light around them. It wrapped them in the memory of Irene's hair. The moon spread a rippling trail upon the water. The stars dipped down and up again, and anchored barges sang:

"Voice from an unseen face,
Shadow of stars in the sea.
Love, your fragile embrace
Grows strong in my memory."

Greco wanted the girl who lay beside him. Her perfect form gave body to the long black cloak. Now the stars became her background. Now the water, gilded by the moon, rose and spread behind her. Irene spoke, and her voice was madness to him. The musical tongue was like a silver thread of song. His memory beat with the deep-toned Greek. He lost track of the words, and watched the motion of her lips beneath the lace, watched to see her keen eyes shining through. Her voice spoke forward, while soft songs formed around it, songs from the balconies under which they passed, songs from other gondolas, and songs from lanterns mingled with the stars far out on the sea; still Irene spoke on, although he longed for silence, or longed to place his hand where it might feel the motion of her throat. Then he looked at the heavy double mask across her face, and at the heavy cloak that covered her, and told himself there must be other women. He did not see her face nor hear her words, so how could she be different from another who might

be with him in a gondola while dark water lapped against its sides, and the canal sucked in stars and palaces? There might be any woman other than this girl, wrapped with him in the moon's long, golden hair, and this was Titian's woman.

Her lips spoke on coldly while she thought: "What is the difference, this or any other man?" She felt his arm beside her, and her eyes, broken into many crystals by the lace, glittered in a thousand pieces over his solemn form. She let her cold hand touch his, and drew it quickly back, believing he was thinking of his inamorata. Otherwise he would have held it. Ah, why should she bother about this man who moved Titian's brush soaked up with olive oil, and then went to some lady, probably paid?

Irene ceased talking, so Il Greco spoke. She listened to the way the words became thick and dark in his mouth that had not lost its accent. She told herself: "It is only little things that make him different from any man his age. I am hungry for the youth of him, or any other. It's a cold wave of night that makes me shiver, not the voice that mangles Italian under the deep intonation of the Greek." She chose an unimportant word out of his phrase—"*Sbeletæ*" she pronounced it.

"*Sbeletæ*," he repeated after her, reaching for the clear tone of her voice and trying to make his lips and tongue mimic hers.

The stars sank low behind her, then the waters rose to the rhythmical, slow movement of the gondolier,

and Irene's maid balanced before them, swaying, now her head up, now her feet up, as the slim boat seasawed onwards and cut across canals. The boatman shouted warning of their coming. The gondola's long silver key took the light and took the shadow. The flow of speech had stopped. Irene felt her thick mask melt under the steady gaze of Greco's eyes. She thought, "This man is different," and wondered what she would do if he touched her. Her whole being trembled at the imaginary touch.

Greco leaned back on the cushions, his face turned away, and watched the stars replacing water, water replacing stars; and he wondered about the difference, this one or another, this or Fioretta, or Flaminia, or Maria, or another; only this was Titian's woman, intrusted to his care. He fingered the little dagger he had placed beneath his shirt in order to protect her. It was a crime, the pointed knife. Men were forbidden to wear arms in the theatre, but he wore it to protect her if anyone should dare try to see her face. If anyone should touch the mask that covered her, he would cut him into pieces. He was happy for the dagger and the crime.

Stars grew thick around them as they pushed through the moon's long hair, catching in it, swaying. The gondolier began to sing, and the fragrance of ambergris was suffocating in the lungs. Irene saw the moon turn copper on Il Greco's hair. She saw him look out over the water and thought that he was lonely for the other woman. She shuddered. Not even one

night of youth for her—an old man's thing. Could he not see she was as lovely as any other? Underneath her cloak, that she was young? She turned her face from his back of glowing hair and watched over the water.

Greco saw the moon turn silver on her heavy hood and told himself another woman would be exactly the same; that it was bought fragrance of musk and ambergris. As he bent toward her the dagger dug into his chest, and he leaned back, glad of the pain.

At last the slender gondola grated on the shore and stopped. Round lights trembled on the surface of the water. Pointed lights pierced through it. Tall lights rose on marble pillars of the portico, and the theatre in a blaze of illumination blotted out the moon. Greco helped Irene from the barque. Their mood was lost in the confusion of many people. Irene and her maid hurried through the crowd to the hidden balcony where women sat apart, unseen by the men on the lower floors.

The theatre rumbled impatiently for the great Flaminia to appear, and only a strictly enforced law kept the audience from jumping on the stage to drive away the boy who spoke the long prologue. Il Greco touched the dagger at his chest, and thought he might protect his lady now. He was elated. He tried to see above the hissing to the section where she sat.

The play was like other plays of the Commedia dell'Arte, planned to amuse, with such small bother

over consistency of plot that the scenarios which remain have been compared to the débris of fireworks that have been shot. Nor was there any thought about the building of character. There were type figures into which each actor set his own personality, making his own speeches, his own gestures, and Flaminia, who appeared that night, was the finest actress and the most beautiful woman of all. She danced through situations strung together to make men desire or laugh.

Greco heard the laughter, but hardly understood the words the comedians shouted in thick dialect. But Irene heard them mock Pantaloon, an old man. "Sensual, of course," one cried, "because the old add to the five senses three besides: the sense of cough, the sense of discussion, and the sense of grumbling."

Greco only saw the lovely girl, more lovely among male actors all of whom were grotesquely masked, and he knew he never would forget the beauty of her as she leapt with her skirts circling high above her thighs (much later he was to paint angels swinging through the air like that), for his perceptions were sharpened by the beating of his heart against the pointed knife. While he watched, he was alert, thinking of Irene. The roar of men around him made him stiffen for Irene, imagining her seated high above him, anxious about the fragile string that held her mask, and the many curious fingers. He turned continually to see that no man mounted to the ladies' balcony. He imagined himself rushing to attack some such person, and if he was not wounded, the police. . . .

The curtain dropped. Buffoons and acrobats dashed out to entertain between the acts. Their play was full of childish frankness and broad ribald jokes made keener by the sense of women hearing them. Greco touched his dagger, worried for Irene, feeling himself the one fine person raised from the mob by the thought of her great loveliness that he was to protect. Around him other young men touched their knives, each one eager with the same delicious dread, each one feeling himself the only one, each becoming exactly like the rest, completely impersonal at that moment when each thought himself most individual, all levelled and same with love, the world's one generality.

Love grown stronger when the curtain rose, love grown deeper without knowing why, only the sight of beauty, only the sense of danger, and all the songs that swung about, and all the dancing and the laughter, all the brilliance of the actors on the stage became the attributes of her who sat unseen above, became her voice, and her face watching down. In a late scene Flaminia leapt nude from her window, followed by the amorous old man. She swung her sheet about, trying futilely to cover herself, but was unable. Her great beauty held the whole house still.

Il Greco saw her only as loveliness. Irene saw only the old man, and neither paid attention to the last act where Pantaloon found that his own son was the true love of Flaminia, and rejoiced at what had been his agony, seeing the sweethearts go away; while the loud-mouthed bully, the blustering Spanish captain, roared

and killed himself with grief; and the buffoons made a mistake and buried Pantaloon in spite of his shrieks, which they agreed were not to be believed as coming from the dead; so that the lovers had to return, dig up the father, and revive the captain; then everybody danced, and everybody sang, and everybody went off happily, excepting tortured lovers who did not know their love.

Il Greco said, "Irene, take off your mask."

She put her hand up quickly to protect her face.

"Don't worry. I won't force you."

He was hurt. The gondola swung on, while neither spoke.

Irene was nervous from having sat masked all evening, stifling in the heat above the roars of men, above their cat-calls, imitations of women's cries, their hissing, and their laughter, or their wild applause. Most of the women around her had been courtesans, although it was whispered that a countess and a princess were there. She thought the play was vulgar with its nudity, and slapstick, and operations performed in the centre of the stage. She was still trembling from the coarse voices, and smells, and emotions of the night. She watched over the clear water that reflected stars, stars everywhere, above them, and below them, as the gondolier's long paddle plashed. The air was cool. Irene wanted to unmask, but did not dare, Il Greco wished it so. She asked, "Are all the plays like that?"

Greco said: "About. The characters always are the

same: the lovers, the old man, the valets who are buffoons; and the scenario is just to show them off."

His voice stopped. It was an effort for him to talk across this night that was made for quietness. There was not even singing any more. Only the rippling water, and the two in the narrow boat. The maid was like a sleeping creature at their feet. The gondolier was hidden by the canopy. But Irene's stillness was the sort that forced sentences to take up again.

"There are no such actors anywhere as here. They travel all over Europe. They say that in some countries there are men who write so well that the interpretation hardly matters; but even they praise Italian players. I should think, though, written words would go dead when learned." Language felt heavy and awkward on his tongue. He made mistakes in words and grammar, slipped in some Greek. "It doesn't matter, but it seems so much finer to have the actors make the thing before you, doesn't it?"

"But the plot?" Irene asked.

"Oh, what's the difference about the plot? If you have the same characters, the plot is bound to be about the same. But there's a way of taking off a hat, or of walking across the stage, or of speaking, that changes everything. Flaminia, now"—he really had no interest to talk on—"she's easily the finest."

"I suppose you'd say that she's a woman any man would love, and that's enough to make the play."

"Why, yes. It is a scandal the way they rush to her

dressing-room after the show. They say men leave their wives for her."

"And she always has the old man rushing after her?"

"You mean in the play? Yes. It is funny with his puffing and his blowing."

"It's a queer idea of funny!"

Greco did not hear her bitterness. He made himself talk on across the night that sobbed for silence. He told himself that he must not mistake anything she said, or put a meaning into any gesture that she made as he had that first time. He reminded himself of the weeks she had not spoken to him. He reminded himself of her scorn when she did speak, and even now the way she kept her mask on her face, as though he were a stranger to her. He told himself that he must think of other women. Irene was not the only one.

Irene's face was wet beneath her mask with tears or perspiration, she did not know; but she was uncomfortable, unhappy, and did not dare to uncover for fear of being red and ugly; and more nervous every minute, she writhed to think it was the favourite joke of Italy, the old man and the young girl. All the youth within her longed for other youth. Greco was beside her while the water lapped around them, caressing the frail barque. Her maid seemed to be asleep. The gondolier was high among the stars. But Greco spoke continually of Flaminia; there was still some other woman that he loved; and he was proud and

disdainful of her. If her hand touched his, he did not make it stay. He was haughty, cold, and young. He did not need her bit of youth because his form was elegant even in common clothes, and his face was beautiful—not, perhaps, in evenness of feature—but it was so young and sensitive, shell-like, silver beneath the moon, with nostrils that seemed to quiver. Or was it only the reflections on his face? Was it the lights from rippling water that seemed to make him stir with a fire of inner feeling? His skin took brilliance and shadow beautifully. And that was youth—youth too high to touch her who was an old man's thing and yet untouched by any man, only a vessel filled with the reverence and the affection her grandmother had given her speaking of young Titian at Augsburg. She had held that memory and been true. But what could Greco think of her? He so often spoke of spirit, greater than all force of flesh. Her spirit was lonesome, though, and weary. He should understand, and not despise her hunger for the young. Ah, but there was nothing to understand, except that there is no dignity to a woman who shows herself unsatisfied.

The gondolier turned the long boat to cross the small canal. He called the cry that they were coming. The maid sat straight, then lay down again. Palaces rose close to them. Walls made the night turn dark. No words cut across it. When they came again to the wide water, the moon spread out her hair. They floated gently through it.

Irene's mask was still on her face, and under her

thick domino her body lay remembering its own lines and thinking of Flaminia, a woman any man might love. Whatever they might say of an actress's loose life, at least she had the dignity of refusing surplus love.

Greco looked out over the golden water. Golden hair. All women made their hair seem golden. What was the perfume of musk and ambergris that any other might not buy it? What was Irene but the only woman who was near him, and the only woman loyalty forbade, and a woman whose proud dignity . . . There would be no end of trouble to offset her nearness. There must be other women. Her hand was cold when he helped her from the barque. She was tall, raised by her shoes, and her bearing high—wonderful.

This night of desire must not occur again. In all of Venice there must be many other women. Think of her otherwise. Only now that the long ride in the gondola was ended, he wished that it might be begun again, that he might feel the whole thing differently, speak differently, and realize something that had been in the atmosphere and that he had not touched, nor could he define it even now.

The next day Irene posed without fatigue. She had no feeling of her body as she stood, and the ache of her raised arm seemed to belong to some one else.

The walls of the studio slipped away and her eyes went far beyond them, lost in dreams.

"Aren't you tired?" Titian asked.

Irene said, "No."

The dreams had melted and the studio was there with the two men moving around it busily, Titian breathing hard, Greco almost blue about the lips; and above his nose, between his eyes, an explosion of worried furrows. He was more tense than ever, so straight and thin that he seemed brittle. Through the long silence Irene wondered what she had thought about before Titian spoke. The stifling heat underneath the mask, and Flaminia, not so much more beautiful. Through the canvas she could see the motion of the brush praising her own figure. Titian need not choose an ordinary woman, and it was not because her art was great he took her as a pupil. She was almost proud of the insignificance of her own work as she listened to his brush swish on the canvas. Couldn't Titian have Flaminia, or any woman in the world he chose? As a musician, also, she was quite ordinary, and yet Titian kept her while the whole of Venice sang beneath his window—thousands of gondolas, thousands of beautiful women who could sing, and yet she was the only one who lived inside. She wondered if it was a particularly fine day, or if they were more than usually quiet in the studio that she heard the music on the water so very well. She must have listened to a good many songs, for Titian said: "You're pale. Don't you think you'd better rest a while?"

She answered, "No."

The men seemed to have been quarrelling. Greco's eyes blazed and the small explosion above his nose was deeper than it had been. Titian had the drawn line of anger that cut from his nostril back up to his eye as he spoke something to Greco, about discipline of hand, something about discipline of mind, and a little healthy humility. Then they slipped far off from her, and the memory of a cool night replaced the sense of heat under the mask. The stars were leaping, only she—why should she only be wrapped under hot folds of a disguise? Flaminia is a woman any man would love. Why should Irene only, an aristocrat, hold to the thing a lesser woman could despise, and see the lesser woman take what she. . .

Irene lost the word, and the silence of the studio boxed her off from the bright life on the water, shut her in with Titian, his skull-cap pushed far back on his head, his eyes strained and his feet shuffling to the canvas and away, standing to look at it, stopping to cough, then back to the canvas, panting, and quiet, and afterwards:

"Don't hold the pose so steadily, Irene. You can relax, you know."

"I know."

The air was so brilliant that the palaces seemed set with precious stones, and there was a sense of pageant along the canal. Titian wheezed and coughed through the sunshine. She remembered: "The old have three more senses, sense of cough. . . . Then it was the joke

of all Italy, probably all Europe, the thing they thought most funny wherever actors voyaged. But Titian could have any woman that he wanted pose for him. Kings begged for his services. He had refused the pope. And if her work was wonderfully bad, then she herself—only if one must keep tight within oneself an ivory idol immaculate; only if one must deny . . . Her thoughts turned to darkness.

She stood unconscious of the scene about her, unconscious of herself, unconscious that Greco worked with scared determination to make Titian recognize the one weakness of his enemy, Tintoretto, too strong in full maturity for anyone to fight with a battle of round forms. Greco's thoughts did not express themselves easily in words, and Greco's tongue was timid before Titian, but Greco's brush made intense, broad lines that Titian smoothed back angrily.

"They already talk of my crude blotches, call them the work of age, but you in your youth seem less able than I to control the fingers. Bring me more colours. If you cannot discipline yourself, be more careful in your life. At any rate, bring me more colours, and keep your brush away. Bring me yellow ochre and vermilion, quick! Irene, you've been posing almost an hour solidly. Rest now."

"It's all right."

"Rest. I insist."

It was like breaking her stiff joints to move. Il Greco came back into the studio. He stood by the window while she and Titian talked.

"Do you like it, Irene?"

She could answer without looking: "It is great. No one but Titian can ever find fault with his work."

The canvas was a praise of her beauty, of all beauty, and of life. It was the caress of a great poet. It set her above, above. . . . She looked down at her bare feet, her straight toes with their polished nails. She saw across the floor the careless slippers Greco wore, and the way he stood against the wall with his muscles tightly drawn, and how from time to time he gestured with his hand as though he held a thing of weight, then straightened it and cut a swift, smooth dash across the air. His face watched through the window. A quiet sea lay like night behind it, starred with gondolas. She did not need to talk to Titian. He had been lost a long time in his work.

Titian said: "All right, Lavinia. Ready to pose again?"

Irene stood with a tall staff in her hand. It held a flag. She figured that she was just eighteen, and that it took countless years to reach Titian's age, but women died much sooner. She wondered why Titian's daughter Lavinia had become heavy and flat with marriage. Her mouth cut straight with certainty, instead of rising with the questioning tilt of upper lip of the young girl whose eyes laughed at the corners of their lids as though they knew a wonderful secret they had not yet told the brain. The brain always turned that to an ordinary thing as soon as it knew. Then the eyes dulled and the mouth straightened.

Did Greco know? He seemed to know a great many things. They seemed to torture him. It was hard to tell with Greco. He said that Flaminia was a woman any man might love. But why? She was no more beautiful. She played a part that was planned out for her. The lines she said were not so clever. It was only that she was set upon the stage and seen in a part that —ah, the part was not so wonderful, nor so unusual.

"I can't let you pose longer," Titian said. "Even if you don't think you are tired, I can tell by the way your colour comes and goes."

"I am not tired, really."

"Then just a few minutes more."

Il Greco stood behind him with the paints. There was something strange about Greco's face.

"Your profile, Irene, please."

She sighed and thought: "It does not matter," and wondered what didn't matter. Something about Greco's grey face and russet hair. The walls of the studio had disappeared again. She imagined that she was being carried in strong arms. She thought of relaxation, while she stood in utter tenseness, too erect.

"You have been wonderful today. I'm tired, if you are not." There was something more that Titian said, some angry words to Greco, and some kind words to her, before he left the studio.

Il Greco began to clean up things. He scraped the palette quickly. He began to wash the brushes. Irene thought he hurried so that he could go. She determined that he should not leave today. She looked at

the huge canvas. It was painted like a song in praise of her. She turned another picture from the wall. Also in her praise. Another still, in praise of her. Il Greco was washing the large brushes. She turned a long, low canvas for which she had posed nude. Titian himself called that a poem in her glory. Her finger moved along the perfect line, along the fulness of the form—all praise of her. She turned another canvas. Her arms found pleasure in the heavy work, turning one after another in adulation of her beauty. Her arms were like insane things repeating and repeating the work of praise. The narrow shoulders of her dress pulled taut, but her feet were happy moving across the cold mosaic stones. Greco worked within the circle of the things she moved. She could not let him leave while her body was awake and all its pores were joyous as her muscles strained to turn the weight of pictures, all in praise, until her praise sang out from walls and echoed back in answer, praise on praise; it was an ode to her full beauty.

Greco mumbled as he bent over his work. She did not know whether he saw what she was doing. He must at least have seen the dancing of her feet and the swaying of her body as she swung to turn the things.

Greco said: ". . . can't see. It must be the force of spirit greater than the beauty of a form. It is not only because Titian . . . but it is a greater thing." He saw before him Tintoretto's white Christ as he spoke, then saw the turmoil of the Crucifixion, the force and

beauty and the power of great bodies twisting themselves far out of the wall until the flat surface disappeared. "Beauty of body, yes. But not in this house."

Irene set the canvas down so sharply that the buckles on her shoulders broke. Her robe fell. Greco looked up as he heard the picture land. She felt her dress slide from her, saw his eyes, and did not catch the cloth. She stood before a landscape done in Titian's youth. The room resounded with her. Anthems to her sang from every wall.

Il Greco stared. The studio did strange things. It became a ball tossed from hand to hand. The painted trees behind her seemed to move, the water flow, and the little animals to dance among the leaves.

Irene saw his face become a thing she did not understand. She felt her nudity. She had either to laugh or to cry. She laughed.

Then Greco became absolutely white. The trees behind her settled into place. Irene was motionless. She ceased to laugh. Greco broke the paint-brush in his hand. In the face of her immobile beauty, embittered by her laughter, he said, "I would as soon trample on a work of art."

He left the room. Irene drew her clothes about her and began to cry.

It was an extraordinarily fine day even for the season. Sunshine made Venice seem the inside of the

sun, all golden and beautiful. A bride was in her gondola being rowed to the church of the Frari. She sat in satin outside of the satin canopy, and wore a coronet of pearls on her gold head. Her barque, hung with flowers, was followed by forty other gondolas, with music playing and the gondoliers in red.

Greco heard some one knock. He called, "Come in."

Clovio stood in the open doorway of Greco's room. Clovio had on his tongue to cry: "A bride is on the water. The whole place is draped in sunshine." The words rolled from his mouth mechanically, dead. He was stupid with astonishment, for the shades were drawn, the room so dark that he could barely make out anything. In this obscurity, Il Greco could not work, and on his small, stiff chair he could not rest. The insistent sunshine made the curtains blue behind him, and shadows gave an ashen pallor to his face. Clovio said: "Everyone outside is gay. Come, Domenicos!"

Greco answered, "No. Stay with me if you want," and when it seemed that Clovio was going to stay: "It's so confused. Old, deceived by greatness. City itself old, not realizing."

Clovio was anxious for the lad. He did not want to leave him in that mood, and yet, the sparkling sunshine called him. He thought perhaps Greco might be homesick for Crete, and led him on to talk of Candia. "Aren't there flowers in abundance there? I know the wine is rich and sweet."

"Yes. Yet its own people drink only milk, because it is an old, defeated land."

Clovio watched the tortured, dreamy face, so young it did not need to be afraid of shadows, even when it was tired and drawn. But behind it, pores of sunlight sifting through closed shades made the old man eager to be out.

He said, "I am too old for melancholy."

Greco laughed sharp-edged laughter. "Go along."

As Clovio left, he met two cardinals coming into Titian's house, and paused to speak to them, but found it had become difficult for him to make small talk. The bride had gone into the Gothic church, but music stayed behind, and music swelled from the great buttresses. Laughter lay all along the bright canals, but it sounded like the tinkle of shallow water, and the sun seemed as artificial as the women's golden hair. He thought he must be tired, and told the gondolier to take him home.

There were letters that he had to write, one to an old friend in Croatia. He thought he might tell him of the beauty of the day, of the young bride, and of the Cardinals Granvelle and Pacheco met at Titian's door. He took up paper. This sort of conversation often was refreshing. He looked out of the window, and then back, to write the sunshine down.

The face of the young man stared back from the white page. It made Venice become tinkle of broken glass, and the bride a silly thing. The sun was nothing but crude light beside that intense face. He wondered what could be the cause. He was too old himself to stand its agony, and yet could not place any other

thought on the blank sheet. Perhaps in writing it he might explain the enigma to himself. It might at least exorcise the vision from his mind. He wrote very slowly:

I went to see Greco, to take him for a walk through the city. It was a beautiful day with a delicious spring-like sun that put joy into everybody. The whole place seemed to be in carnival. I was stupefied, on going into Greco's room, to find the window-curtains so completely drawn that I could hardly distinguish any objects. Greco was seated on his chair, and neither worked nor slept. He did not want to go out with me for . . .

Clovio stared at the page and at the memory of the eyes. He did not understand. The sun was setting and his pen had dried. A messenger came from Titian to ask him to a banquet that same night. The letter lay before him still unended. Ah, finish it, and rest! He dipped his quill into the ink again, and thought how queer it was that all of Venice had become so slight a background for that face. It became a limp thing, without body, when he refused it, like a robe that had fallen on the ground. More, Clovio had been unable to explain. The unfinished sentence waited, the blank after "for. . . ."

the light of day disturbed his inner light.

The two cardinals had come to Titian's house and praised his work. They indicated a desire to stay and dine with him. Titian was tired. He had worked very hard, and had been annoyed by Greco, and the thought of Tintoretto worried him. Now these two men stood with their wish expressed. It was awkward. Neither as host nor as artist did he have the right to refuse, nor as the gracious gentleman he was, to be embarrassed; so he threw his purse to his steward and cried: "Make ready. Have the whole world dine with me tonight."

The great hall was set with all the splendour Titian had gathered around him through the years. The air was sweet with aromatic shrubs. Silver baskets of exotic fruits (pomegranates, persimmons, figs, pineapples and the rest) hung from the spread branches of orange trees set against the wall. On the table, silver peacocks stood within the great wheels of their spread tails, with bright lights burning in their beaks, and incense smoking underneath their claws. Between them, jasmine trailed around the little ponds where sea-horses swam, and the guests shouted with delight when the crisp, white things they had taken up for napkins broke into sugar wafers in their hands.

Everyone was there except Tintoretto. All the da Pontes had come, Jacopo with his flute, the rest with other instruments. Maria sang, gazing with the wide eyes of her wide face around the hall. Veronese played his violoncello as brilliantly as he painted these luxurious scenes. His music threw the room into such

fête that everyone spoke of the marriage in Cana, and the miracle of water changed to wine. Then Titian consented to play on his bass-viol. Irene was like an idol at the feast, tall, clothed all in gold, with topaz jewellery, amber eyes and golden hair, a magnificent image of voluptuous wealth.

After they had sharpened their appetites with truffles, oysters, and spicy meats washed down with Rhine wine, they were served caper soup, then sturgeon and countless quantities of vegetables. Da Ponte cried out that while nothing was raised in Venice, yet they had everything. He gorged himself. The servants passed silver salvers of perfumed water for the guests to dip their hands before the repast began in earnest, to last three hours more.

Titian sat at the centre of the high table, with the cardinals at his sides. Clovio was near them, then Irene and Veronese, the da Pontes further down, and Greco far off among other apprentices. The long meal dragged on for him. Irene was a tall goddess, and she never looked his way. Only fat Maria da Ponte, with thick eyes, gazed at him over her goblet of Malvoisie from Crete. Irene was tall and slender. She made him remember a Cretan song: "My love is like a cypress, and the words of her mouth are honey sweet." No woman could exist beside Irene, but Irene spoke to the cardinals and did not glance at him.

After the pigeons had been served with gold leaf in the sauce, and every brain was atomized with Bourgogne wine; and while the pages passed, this time,

golden bowls to rinse the hands, somehow the news came in. No one knew how it entered, whether a servant brought it, or a guest; but it started at the lower end, whispered among the apprentices, that the Council had awarded the commission to paint the canvas, in celebration of the battle of Lepanto, to Tintoretto. They were afraid that Titian was too old.

Il Greco heard it and his lips turned blue. He did not speak, but somehow the word spread past him and went on up the table. He could see heads bend as though a wave swept over them. Up the table, up and up it flowed, past the da Pontes in a burst. Clovio's white face seemed to turn to stone, and the news held back an instant, then drove on. Irene reared her golden breast. The topaz chains upon her sparkled like her eyes. She was a lioness, protective, strong; and yet the word slipped past her as the guests bent to wash their hands.

Titian straightened in his chair. He looked around the table slowly. There were a hundred people, and he looked carefully at every one. His own face was like a mask and, as he turned, the room fell into silence. He saw some of the officials glance sideways. There were few people who could meet his steady gaze. Some tried to speak gaily to a neighbour, but could not, and the only sound was of faint singing out on the canal, and the splashing paddles of the gondolas.

Then Titian spoke to Cardinal Pacheco on his right. His voice cut loud and clear down the long hall. "I am doing an important canvas for the King of Spain,

to celebrate the aid His Most Catholic Majesty has brought the Church. You will be glad to know the work is almost finished. . . ."

His voice sank underneath the roar of other voices rising. Irene sang without accompaniment:

> "My lover is the artist
> Who can picture me most fair."

But when they begged her to sing again, she apologized that she must have eaten and drunk too much, that she was not in voice tonight, and since the truth of what she said was clear to everyone, they let the matter go. As da Ponte remarked to Maria, "She had started with good spirit, and then choked." Maria giggled, glanced up, and saw Irene for the first time meet Il Greco's eyes.

Irene seemed to become younger and smaller as she looked. Her hands twisted her topaz beads to rope, and her mouth moved nervously. She turned sharply as the waiter brought the pastry in, and when it was cut, parrakeets flew out and beat about the room. Titian's closest friends made the most clamour; Titian's secret enemies were still. Irene had caught a dazed bird in each hand. She stood laughing with them held above her head. Clovio toasted the golden goddess in champagne. Bassano whistled on his flute. The birds called back. Irene felt Greco's eyes on her raised arms and let the struggling creatures go.

Maria cried, "I wish you'd given them to me."

Irene smiled in a tired, relaxed way.

Titian had sunk in his chair. His white head rested on the high brocaded back, and he whispered to the servant to call musicians in, and dancers, and acrobats, and dwarfs. There must be many free, even if they had to send as far as the Piazza San Marco, but to see that everything was done to amuse his guests. It was all that he could do to keep on sitting in his chair. He thought life was slipping from him. It was his first defeat, and it brought such a slackening and giving in, he felt his body change, wither, and grow small.

Irene stood beside him. Her topaz-covered hands offered a crystal cup of deep brown Spanish Malaga wine, which Titian drank. Greco watched, remembering Bassano's words, "Unless there is another plague, he'll never die," and knew then that the prophecy was true.

Il Greco walked black hours along the banks of the canals, haunted by the memory of Titian's face. It had been as though a bacchanalia beat behind him. Irene was the god's leopard. No. It was as though some one had smashed the crystal sphere of earth, yet Titian had sat calmly, and had looked around the table with heavy eyes and drooping lids that let nobody see within them while he saw and drew together what was left, then told them that he painted for the King of Spain. He was nearer God than man. It had been

then that the bacchanalia burst. He remembered how Irene had poured wine, Irene swaying golden, tall above them, pouring Tokay, Graves, Peralta, Muscat, Monte Moro, Rhum and Chypre and Champagne. As they drank, there had swarmed among them dancers, negroes, acrobats, dwarfs, and Titian sat above them, not like Bacchus, but a sterner and a more eternal god. Irene, who laughed loudly with the others, only smiled when she gave wine to him. His white fingers took the cup and seemed also to take the jewelled hand. Ah, who was he, Il Greco, walking on the edge of the canals, to have dared expect Irene to glance at him, when Titian was there like the breath of God, making the life around him swirl, but himself always above it, granite rock!

The lagoon lapped far below the banks where Greco walked; the gondolas grew fewer, the voices far apart. He thought of Irene balancing above the height of her tall shoes, and felt his body bend over low water. He wondered if the revelry continued in Titian's house. He had left. He could not stand it. Titian had to sit within the clamour. Veronese had been beside him to caress him with his music, and Irene had sung to him, but what Titian heard or felt, no one could know. He had seemed to sit alone, and only spoke to the cardinals while the acrobats performed feats of astounding strength.

Far, lonely lights upon the water shivered down from gondolas. They were golden, oscillating like

Irene. Il Greco walked on over bridges, and more bridges, turning this way, turning that way, losing himself in the dark quarters, finding himself again in a burst of light. The figures above the great clock by San Marco beat on the huge bell. Greco did not count the hour, but walked on until only stars were reflected on the water, no more singing, no more gondolas, and the noise must have died out in Titian's house.

The night was indigo above him and black below. Clouds covered the disc of moon, and only for short instants let its brilliance fall on him golden as the memory of Irene. Oh, memory of her, and of the night before, and of her nearness and her perfume, and of the accident of beauty in the studio, would they ever give place again to Irene as the god's gold leopard? Irene seemed once more so high above him that he could not believe his hand had touched her in the barque, nor that she had been nude before him. He remembered his sharp speech and was ashamed to have spoken as though he thought it might have been intentional. It was no wonder she had not glanced at him.

The splendour of Venice seemed hallucination as he strode along the black lagoons, false and deceptive always, bright, and then dark again. Could its life ever be absorbed by a man from Crete, bitter with the heritage of a conquered land, longing for a spirit such as he had seen in the white form of Titian? Pagan

Titian, yet with such godliness of courage nurtured by a life of wealth, strengthened by success, a fighter where one never dreamed to find one. Ah, if he had put that spirit in his work, instead of heathen sensuality, it would have vanquished Tintoretto.

Greco hardly felt the stones beneath his feet. He seemed to walk on air over the canal, and actually he sometimes hardly stepped upon the pavement, tall, swaying shadow, like a thickening of night, half over land, half over water, as he went thinking of Titian, thinking of Irene.

He slipped quietly down the long hall towards his room, and without intention stopped at Irene's door. It was as though a canal cut suddenly before his feet. The door was smooth, flat, closed. He spread the palms of his two hands over it, and his whole being sobbed, Irene. Irene, the god's virgin, Irene coursed through his blood, Irene in the afternoon's white beauty richer than in gold, more feline than the panther, more wonderful. Irene. He hardly knew that the long, pointed nail of his little finger scratched her door. The door gave way.

Irene stood before him, small on her bare feet, and her gold hair wrapped around her like the hair of the Magdalene. Her eyes were wide and terrified. She whispered: "Greco, I am afraid. He called me names of other women and caressed me so. . . . Domenicos, do not leave me. I am afraid to be alone."

She was a child-like thing without her shoes, and her face was soft without its unguents and its paint.

Her golden clothes lay scattered on the floor, and Greco stayed.

The old servant, known as Titian's Gerolamo, helped Greco pack. In fact, he did all the work except the tying up of the few canvases Greco had painted for himself in his free hours. He bent over the young man's wooden trunk in obvious ill-humour. "As many times as you will ask me, I can only repeat that Titian does not discuss such matters. He simply told me to get Il Greco off. Why should he give reasons? It is his right, and you are the person who should know the situation best. There is nothing that he needs to say, or to explain. If a man does not satisfy him, that is enough. Besides, this morning, even you should understand that he is unusually tired. Titian is resting in bed in a darkened room. But if you don't believe me, and are unwilling to go, I can take you to him, anyway. He won't add a thing, but you'll have it from him in his own voice. . . . All right. Come on!"

But when Gerolamo put his hand on Titian's door, Greco said, "Never mind."

The shrivelled man shrugged and turned back. He opened and closed his mouth many times and the veins beat in his temples. He disliked Greco, always had, was jealous of him, and very glad he was to leave. He had found the young man much too arrogant, and

was always disturbed by something in the way he painted; so, although he moved his lips, even the conventional words of sympathy and encouragement, that he kept for all the men whom he dismissed, did not come out.

Greco realized that it was certain he could not get rid of this creature, and he did not dare to speak the name Irene. He was afraid even to glance at her closed door as they passed, and yet it seemed impossible that he should leave without seeing her again, never to know what her part was in all of this. He had to talk once more to Irene, but there was nothing he could do to free himself of Gerolamo. He raised his voice as he repassed her door, carrying his little trunk. He said, "I am sorry to go."

Gerolamo laughed outright at the banality of the remark.

Irene, in her room, looked up from her page and heard their footsteps silence. She turned back to her letter. Only a little note:

Domenicos, speak to me. Call me beautiful, and by my name, for every time I hear that in your voice, I become dear to myself, and I persuade myself that I am still something, but without your assurance I am nothing.

She had written it imagining his eyes as they read, and had stroked the paper remembering the way his face could light. Now that the steps were far away, she hurried to his room, found it empty, stripped ut-

terly, and she became whiter than the parchment in her hand.

While Clovio stood helpless before Greco's grief, he realized that old age was not all bad. At least the nerves were less tightly strung, and one sorrow did not make the whole world fall away. For Greco raged at the futility of life, thinking, if it was caused by Irene, then all my effort, all my work, is nothing beside the anger of a girl. He thought it must be because of Irene, since she had sent no word to him. She would have known that she could reach him through Clovio, whereas it was impossible that he should get to her. He imagined her laughing, as he had often seen her laugh, and thought even that one night had been a slight thing to her, or something horrible. She must have had Titian send him off. Then his love of Titian and his art were small beside her whim, and with this return to the first thought, the cycle of his brooding recommenced.

"Why did I quarrel and leave Crete? It is all so useless. Why should I try to paint?"

"That is the one thing of which an artist is not allowed to think," Clovio answered him.

Then Greco made an effort to be gay. His lips spoke and laughed, but there was never light or laughter in his eyes.

Clovio thought the only remedy was work, asked

Greco to do a portrait of him, and while he posed he talked, told him that this was the best thing that could have happened, for he was old and able enough to be an independent artist; that a longer time with Titian would have done him harm, and such an affair as he had had with Bassano would have made a powerful enemy; that he had his status as Titian's pupil, and he should be grateful for the way things stood. "It is time you became the hero of your own life. You must be about twenty-seven now, aren't you?"

Greco said, "About," and painted on.

Clovio watched his eyes narrow, his lips draw tight, and thought it was the intensity with which he worked, but Greco was wondering whether he should speak of Irene.

At last he said: "The difference is that with Bassano the thing was understood and ended. I never thought of it again. But this is a mystery. I puzzle over it all the time and cannot get it out of my head."

"I should think it would be easy enough to understand that, after Titian's failure, it is only human he should throw some of the blame on some one else."

Greco went on painting. Then if it was his work, it would be childish and disloyal for him to speak about Irene. He was not sure he wanted it to be a matter of his art, and yet again he could not bear to think it was Irene. He said, "I feel humiliated."

"Now, that's ridiculous. Tintoretto was sent off with less excuse. And many others."

There was only the sound of the brush on the can-

vas, and Clovio wondered how a form could show such agony without a word or gesture, without loss of pride, simply in the way it stood, and something subtle in the colour.

Greco painted until his mind and body were exhausted. Then he walked along the edge of the canals, trying to refresh himself. The moonlight seemed to strengthen him some moments, but left him more depressed.

In spite of everything, Clovio was pleased with the progress of the work. He had not realized that Domenicos had acquired so much skill. He complimented him, told him what he needed was a change of atmosphere. The thing he did not mention was that, at the moment, he wanted to be freed of so much useless pain. He had an illness which had already required one operation on his left eye. Now the operation had to be performed again, and he dreaded to think his sight depended on the surgeons' knives. Moreover, he was threatened with paralysis of his hands. Whatever the intensity of Greco's grief, at least it was a thing that time would cure, those same years that might bring utter helplessness to him. All that he could say in consolation to Il Greco made him realize his own old age too poignantly. Moreover, he began to see that there was something Greco hid, something too precious to share with his old friend. He spoke of it and, after silence, felt bound to add, "You do not have to tell me."

It was well enough to remind himself the young

never trust the old. He was hurt. Or, if he persuaded himself that there was nothing, the clear statement of a muteness that came suddenly laughed at his conceit and made him swear that he would no longer bother with such ingratitude. A little later he would find that he was planning for Domenicos again.

Rome was certainly the place to which he should go. There was a great city continually in need of art, and all of its mighty artists dead—Michel Angelo, Rafael, Piombo, Salviati, Volterra. Even Vasari was generally away. Venice had nothing for a youth who had broken with Titian, while Rome needed a new man, and was used to absorbing foreigners. He looked at Greco's tense, drawn face, solemn and grey against the sparkling background of the city of lagoons, and he thought he would be less of a weird waif in Rome. That city was stern now, mortifying itself. He would hear sounds of prayers and penitence instead of lovers singing, smell incense instead of perfume, witness fasts and flagellation. He thought he would like to watch Domenicos in that monastic atmosphere. It might cure him of his melancholy. Rome had been a different place when Clovio was young, yet, when he remembered the great buildings on the Tiber, and his rooms in the Farnese Palace, the evenings spent in splendid conversation, even of how distinguished travellers to Rome always came to see him, as one of the great sights to marvel over the minuteness of his painting, he wished he might go too, but was afraid he would not have the strength for the long voyage.

The portrait was finished, "and well finished," Clovio said, and saw that if he did not want to talk to Greco of his dread of surgeons he would have to send him off at once. Cardinal Farnese, the great patron of the arts, was away from Rome. He wrote to him at Viterbo:

There is coming to Rome a young Candian, a student of Titian, who, in my judgment, is one of the very few who excel in painting; among other things, he has done a self-portrait which has astonished all the artists here. I greatly desire to place him under Your Sacred and Most Illustrious and Reverent Protection, without your needing otherwise to help him live than to accord him a room in the Farnese Palace until he can arrange something better. Therefore, I beg and pray you, write to your steward to allow him the benefit of one of the upper rooms of your palace. Your Eminence would thus be doing a work worthy of Himself, and I should be very grateful. I kiss your hands with reverence, and remain the very humble servant of your Most Illustrious and Most Reverent Eminence.

Don Julio Clovio.

He showed the letter to Greco, and Greco read it over twice. He was grateful, but there was no joy in his gratitude. He felt himself exiled again, and he was worried by the very wording and spirit of the thing, the show of servility necessary to couch the presumptuous demand. He knew himself tactless. Why,

even now, Clovio, who had given him this letter with such praise of himself, was waiting for him to speak.

"It is very kind of you. I appreciate it."

Clovio set his seal into the wax. "It is nothing at all. You needn't thank me. I like your work."

He felt hurt that there was not more enthusiasm in Greco's voice. He did not know of any other person for whom he would have made such a request. In fact, it seemed to him that Greco was alone in his generation, all other artists old or middle-aged. But excellent in art, or not, he should show a little more appreciation. Perhaps he did not realize what it meant. He would go to Rome as Titian himself had gone, and might even occupy the room that Titian had. Clovio thought of the life in the cardinal's palace. Once there, Greco might understand.

There was still a sense of strain, and of much left unsaid, when Clovio stood with Greco on the boat that took him to the mainland. Clovio had spoken lightly of his own illness, and when he saw the look of horror on the young man's face, he was glad he had decided to send him off, and also grateful to Domenicos. But Greco kept his secret to himself, and Clovio saw the effort with which he talked, yet could not break the barrier. He called it egoism that kept the lad's lips sealed, or, with an inward wink of humour to himself, called it stinginess. Now that he felt old and

weak, it would have given him pleasure to be a power for another, and Greco could afford to be generous with such a quantity of grief. But as he stood beside him, leaning on the rail, there was only pity for the youth, crossing the lagoon for the last time, oblivious to the beauty of dawn on the water, and to the sound of sails snapping at the quiet hour.

He said: "You'll understand some day how well events have fallen out. You are ripe for leaving Venice. Rome is ready for the seed to drop, and you are equipped for going far."

Greco looked down on himself and smiled. His head was covered with a heavy hood that tied around his neck. Besides his boots, he wore high leggings to protect him from the mud and rain. There was a pistol at his belt, and under his shirt the dagger of that other night, for it was to be a long, dangerous journey through the drizzling time of year, the first of fall. His wooden trunk was by his feet, a small thing to be placed on the croup of his mule. It contained the canvases he had done, and all the clothes he owned, not enough, for when Clovio had told him he would need about six changes on the trip, and asked him if he had them, he had answered, "Yes."

Looking up, he saw that he had offended Clovio again. Naturally, the old man was sensitive when Greco smiled after he had made the remark that anyone would make, and yet the only thing that kindness and love could say, and when he realized that this might be the last time his one friend would ever see

his face, he did not want the long, dark years of remembrance to hold him as a cynical thing. Suddenly he wished to talk about himself, to tell the story of Irene. Not only would it bring relief to him, but Clovio would know that he was trusted.

He began, "If I were only sure the cause was in my work . . . " Then he suffocated.

The thought and the half-speech made Irene seem to rise before him, laughing at him, he—pale, scrawny youth, talking of spirit and denying flesh. It was that he had tried to make a statement of his art, and she had replied with her own self, with her whole beauty, making life and art inseparable. She was voluptuous Venice, and whatever he might think or say would never be an answer to her laughter. But he was not sure that she had laughed, or that she wanted him to go, and could not estimate the quality of his defeat. Clovio waited for him to end his phrase, but he was dumb to the depth of himself, seeming to break open from the inside. He could not breathe. Tears forced themselves into his eyes.

Amid confusion, rushing here and there, the gathering of the members of the small convoy, each man finding his own mount, packing his things onto it, Clovio was beside him, and he had never spoken half of his appreciation; but everywhere was the atmosphere, the thought and the command to hurry. If there were only one day, one half-hour of repose, when the question would stop tearing him apart—if he had failed with Titian, or with Irene, or was the whole thing

welded and the failure complete? . . . Then it was futility ever to paint again. With the thought the world turned black and he felt blinded, and blindness made him more sharply conscious of his friend, yet he could not speak. His brain held two words only —failure and futility.

At last, when he was seated on his mule, he turned to Clovio and said: "Without you I don't know what I could have done. You have been so kind to me through failure after failure. I wonder if I am worth while."

Clovio stroked the muzzle of the ass.

The rest of the party had started off. The mule was anxious, but Greco reined it in. He had to speak, and could not, and was unwilling to leave.

Clovio said, "You'd better go."

Greco repeated, "I have been a failure."

"It's only by our failures that we grow, and you have grown."

"That's kind of you."

"Not kind, just true. Go on, or you'll be left. Only remember"—he knew he spoke the world's best words—"I do believe in you."

He slapped the mule's flank and Greco let out the beast. Clovio watched it gallop towards the group. Greco sat loosely, with his shoulders bent; then, as though remembering, "I do believe in you," he straightened. Clovio waited while the early light strengthened from gold into white dawn, and when he realized this might be the last time he would ever have sight to see

Domenicos, he shaded his eyes to watch as long as possible. Through the silver dust of morning he saw him join the others, and saw him ride among them, but different—somehow he sat his mule differently—and Clovio thought that he was like a king on his poor mount.

V. Word from Rome

Singing had never seemed so fine to Clovio as it did when he lay in the hospital with a bandage over his eyes, but after the doctors had assured him his sight was saved. For weeks he had been unable to visualize a memory, or to recall a scene. It was as though his brain had been afraid to think of what he might lose for ever; but, once he knew that he would see again, each idea became a brilliant miniature, as round and sharp in colour as a fine enamel image, and the sounds from the lagoon set all Venice, like an illuminated page, within his eyes. Each word brought its own picture. How clearly he saw the whole scene when the boy at his bedside read Greco's letter full of enthusiasm over Rome.

The Farnese Palace, all intellect gathered there. The audience with Pope Pius the Fifth, "the Father of the Poor"; and Greco wrote: "They say that he has never sinned one human sin. . . ." Clovio saw, as in a tiny picture, Greco kneel before St. Peter's throne and kiss the ring of the saintly vicar. Smiling at the vision, he lost track of the words, but sensed some confusion and bewilderment, as the boy read more slowly, stopped, and repeated a phrase he had read wrongly; then came a note of triumphant joy: "truth

in austerity"; after which the boy's voice slowed again and stopped.

"'Word of,'" he read and repeated—"'Word of' . . . I can't read the name. Ire . . . something, with capital S . . . m . . . bourg, Venice."

Clovio reached for the letter, then laughed and gave it back. "Skip that, and go on."

There were the great processions of the church, tall flaming torches, and when the pope walked through the city streets, Greco would have loved to follow in the ceremonial train, but did not know how to pass the lancers of the Papal Guard.

With a bright picture before him of the eager face to which he wrote, Clovio dictated answers that seemed to him walks with Greco, pointing out his favourite things, listening to the lad's replies, and the reactions his imagination gave the boy were perfect companions to his thoughts.

"Michel Angelo is so great," Il Greco wrote, "that I almost feel it was impudent of me to place a portrait of him in my canvas of the 'Clearing of the Temple.' With him, I painted you, and Titian, making my three masters, and myself."

Clovio answered, "You are learning to flatter. No one deserves to be placed by the side of Buonarroti, who is the very god of painting. I wish I could be with you." Then he stopped to remember whether there were things Greco had asked about. Ire . . . S . . . m . . . bourg. Why, yes! Irene was the one word the boy had been unable to read. That explained

a great deal, and he thought of many things, but did not mention them,—old man's advice, and written by a stranger's hand. Besides, he decided it would hardly be worth while to say he had not heard anything about Irene.

Letter after letter came from Greco, and with the flowering of the year each one brought messages of growing confidence. Friends of Clovio, artists and officials, and private people who bought pictures, wrote to sympathize with the old painter in his illness, and to compliment him on the work of his protégé. One wrote: "No other artist here shows such decision in his style, such verve, or such alertness, or skill in his own manner. His courage seems to grow from day to day, success seems only to improve his art. His technical ability and his knowledge are such that one picture, in particular, is often taken for a Titian." Greco himself wrote: "I have so many orders that I have had to hire an assistant, Lattantio Bonastri from Lucignano, a fine lad of excellent family, and an apt pupil."

Clovio could imagine how his eyes glowed as he wrote those proud words of triumph—Greco, the foreigner, to employ an Italian aristocrat. "And what is the news of Venice, of Titian, and Irene de Spelimbourg?"

The boy looked up from his reading. "That must have been the name in the first note, but it is written larger, and I can read it easily."

Clovio wondered a little about the tone of his reply.

Then he mocked himself for old man's fears. Surely Domenicos needed encouragement. Didn't the lawyer Lancelloti write, "Success improves his art." Clovio dictated: "I am eager to see the young master at work," but added he had been slow in recovering his strength and, now that the good season was almost over, he would have to wait until after next spring's rains. He hesitated, decided not to write that he had heard Irene de Spelimbourg was ill.

Clovio's sight was whole again when Greco wrote of an important audience with the pope, who sent him to the Sistine Chapel to study Michel Angelo's "Last Judgment" with a view to covering those parts of the fresco which showed the nudity of both sexes to an extent that seemed indecent. As he read, he saw the pageant in miniature: Greco humble, and yet proud before the sacred majesty, Greco boasting and confused when other artists asked him if he were appointed breeches-maker to the saints. Regained joyousness of pride showed in the very angles of the letters with which he wrote: "I was very fond of Irene de Spelimbourg. Is there no news of her?"

Clovio did not answer. He expected to leave soon and he did not want to write, "Irene is dead." Then he was afraid Greco would hear because Venetian poets sang praise of her memory, and songs for her were sung in Padua—they said even as far as in Ferrara. A month later Clovio listened to an ode that had been written in Bologna. There had been no letter from

Greco, or about him for a long while, and since it seemed that Irene's memory was celebrated at least to Florence, he might have heard. But surely he could not be pining over Irene's death, beautiful and talented as she was, and pitiful to die at nineteen.

A letter he wrote to Greco brought no reply, but sinister words scattered through the letters of his friends. "Your protégé has turned most arrogant. . . . Whether it is well for a young painter to be too sure . . . Pride is both a folly and a sin. . . . Boastfulness."

The letters made a rumour, and the rumour grew and spread about each thought there was of him. It seemed the words were sparks shot out of fury, and still no message came from Greco. Clovio was worried, wrote to Mancini, his doctor and his friend, to ask specifically, and received the reply: "As you know, the pope has long been looking for some artist to cover portions of the figures of Michel Angelo's 'Last Judgment,' which really is not fit for its most holy place, and, when Greco was consulted, he suddenly declared that, if they would destroy the entire fresco, he would do another which would be more chaste and better for the wall, without conceding anything to this in pictorial execution. I need hardly tell you that the painters and collectors were unanimous in finding this such an unsupportable exaggeration that he was forced out of Rome. Some say that he was called to the court of a king—but what king, and whether it is true or not, I

do not know, and I can give you no news of the whereabouts of your astounding protégé. . . ."

Clovio could not believe that frail young Greek had stood up in the face of Rome and called himself a better painter than Michel Angelo, until Greco's letter came, sent from Genoa and written in a hand that wandered up and down the page with the motion of a ship at sea, the swinging of a body thrown by a tossing ship, and a carelessness of whether the lines tangled in themselves or not.

"You know how different it is to see a picture as an objective thing, or to look at it with a thought of touching it. I want you to understand this, which is so difficult to explain, and you have probably heard the story from my enemies. Everybody is my enemy. I must not write of that, but only tell you how I sat before Michel Angelo's fresco, and underneath his ceiling of tremendous forms, trying to make those works become as mine, so that I might retouch them. I could have lost myself in that different world—that world of giants and of force—but I could not submit to it if I was to possess it. Or rather, I had to make myself a pupil of Michel Angelo, as I had been of Titian. Understand this, dear only friend. While I studied there, I was disappointed in my master.

"I saw the fresco was only an enormous drawing without colour, an imitation of sculpture, and therefore bad; for painting is a separate art, at least as great as sculpture, and painting is the art of paint, and paint is colour. I thought of what that wall would be if it

were done in honest colour, such colour as Titian uses. Retouch . . . the thing was only drawn in, and left to be painted. I thought of how one single spot, left on it by my brush soaked with Venetian colour, would make that whole wall sink away, even as the chapel sank from me as I thought of Titian. Ah, Titian remains an open door through which my mind constantly returns to ask him why he sent me off, and to assure him that my only thought is of loving him and serving him, my only wish to be his hands. It seemed that Titian stood behind me, and before me Michel Angelo, who said it was a pity Titian could not draw. I had not thought once about the nudity, only of myself placed between Titian and the sculptor. Then they asked me what I thought, and when I answered such fury broke, it is impossible to remember my reply. All Rome rails that I said if they would tear down the wall I would repaint it and do a better thing.

"Well, why not? Michel Angelo himself admitted he lacked colour. Everyone knows he recognized that he could not compete with Rafael because of that, and therefore raised Piombo to carry on the fight, making drawings for Piombo to fill with Venetian tints. It is true I have never done so large a thing. The wall is about two hundred square yards, but Venice taught me colour, and Byzantium gave me sense of design, and I know how to make figures fit a space. But there was no chance to argue against the sudden madness. You would have thought I had insulted God. It's a wonder they did not kill me. There were several attempts.

I wish they had succeeded, for now there is no rest for the sole of my foot.

"Then again, I thought of Titian. Will all my life be ruled by his memory? While Rome raged against me, I remembered how he sat at his own banquet, facing Venice and defeat, and told them that he was doing an important canvas for the king of Spain, and I heard my own voice saying, 'I have been called to Spain to work on the new walls of the Escorial.'

"Surely there must be something for me in that vast monastery. In any case, my only hope is Spain and Philip, and I am on my way."

Clovio dropped the letter from his hand.

"Spain," he thought, and "Philip II, king of Spain, born under the evil omen of the sack of Rome, so frightful that the realm itself did not dare celebrate its prince's birth, but sent her dissatisfied people tramping back from the royal palace, muttering along the roads that it was an ominous prophecy for all of Christendom. Philip, born as the Spanish armies swarmed over the walls of Rome, and the slaughter of the leaders only let undisciplined barbarians free for lust, pillage, rapine, and sacrilege, while he who called himself the Catholic King let the Lutheran mercenaries loose on the Eternal City. They ground down the bones of saints to steal their ornaments, tore up the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul from under the altar of St. Peter's Church, and inflicted on them greater indignities than ever they had received when they were martyred. They turned churches into stables, used

crucifixes as marks for arquebuses, invaded every church and monastery, violated nuns. That is Spain as I first knew her, Spain of 1527, at the moment she produced the king that Greco thinks to serve. Since then she justified the violent prophecies, and Domenicos is on his way to her."

He seemed to see the ship beat through the heavy tides, sink under waves to rise again, while her long beams creaked as though they would give in, but she wormed inevitably on towards Spain.

"Spain, the country where the Inquisition was given as the most sacred heritage by Charles to his only legitimate son. Spain, whose running streams and arid fields are sprinkled with the dust of martyrs' bones burned to ash and scattered, so that no one may revere the poor remains. Spain, who brought the crusades onto her own soil, and whose passion is to spread them throughout Europe and the New World with endless persecution for belief, persecution even against the blood of those whose furthest ancestors did not accept every word of bigots—a persecution that will end only with the extinction of all thought, all courage, and that pale-faced lad with russet hair, who told Rome Michel Angelo could not paint, is going there, nearing it each time the great ship rolls with its lookouts watching the seas for pirate craft, each time the wind swells in the sails driving the galleon inexorably towards that land ruled by an insane king.

"Insane, the whole house, mad, lascivious, spawn of crazed Joanna. Charles the Fifth, forever tracked by

the spectre of dementia; and Philip, watching the obsession, grown to power and conceit, defy the pope with such pride as Lucifer used in defying God. Bitter lips of Philip leading a nation turned monomaniac in image of its kings, each man thinking himself a soldier of God, each man a keeper of the conscience of all others, believing in his divine duty to drive neighbour, parent, husband, child into the secret chambers of the Inquisition so strictly guarded that one may disappear and no one know whether he has fallen in its hands or not. The king himself may not find out, and often relatives learn their loved one's fate only when they see him burned in effigy after he has died in torture or in prison. And Domenicos, who quarrelled with meek monks in Crete, is going there.

"Foolish boy, in that hollow galleon, small and fragile on the sea, if it would burst and drop him to the monsters of the waves, that would be more merciful than to take him to that land whose greatest mercy often is to plunge a sword into a living body, whose Inquisition knows no pity higher than to strangle its converts before it lights the flames; while the bigoted king himself in secret reads the condemned books—a gouty, ascetic, voluptuous king who outlives four queens, the last two of whom had been affianced brides of his own son, Don Carlos—a king who would rather have his realm accuse him of the murder of that son, than that it should suspect he died in an unknown cell of that madness which drives him on. And Greco is on his way to serve that king, who allows equal liberties to

jesters and priests; who humiliates his body, and yet loves the most lascivious nudes that Titian paints; who sends him payment only when he writes to offer him sweet mounds of glowing flesh—that king who, with a sinner's obsession to show his piety and to persuade himself that God is in him, sits pale-faced, bright-eyed, to watch the writhing bodies burn; and Greco, with his foolish honesty, his sensitiveness and pride, is going there!

"Greco, the mysterious foreigner, bound for a land which will not abide that anything remain unknown, that anything remain mysterious. Greco, friendless boy. Pray that the compass turn back on itself. Pray that the ship swing round. Pray even for pirates. Greco, embodiment of defiance and of pride, to stand before that king who smiles at artists, but whose dagger is known to follow his smile."

When the wind would sink, the galley slaves would haul the mirrored ship across the sea. Over the breathless water, condemned heretics and suspected ones who refused to confess under torture would drag her on towards the arid shore.

Clovio forgot the fanatical king, and thought only of Greco; he seemed almost to see him alone on a vast plain of granite rock that might be Crete or Spain, and the image brought unreasoned calmness to his fear. It was 1572, less than three years since Greco had begun to work for Titian. Well, Italy had not been the place for him.

VI. Toledo (1577)

Toledo quivered in the strange white light that spread like a sheet of lightning through the sky, fell clattering on granite turrets, split on tall rocks, and cut down to the dim waters where the River Tagus wound, sunless, dark, and motionless, to coil around the town that trembled, waiting while the Inquisition struck, and struck again, and on the third stroke its rod of fury burst with the great Anathema.

For the guards of the Holy Office, and the Holy Brotherhood, assembled with their banners, and their arrows, and their bows, ranged themselves in sombre elegance before the City Hall, while the hoofs of their wild horses clamouring on the stones, and the tossing of the savage heads scattering the foam the beasts' mouths churned until it circled them, made the prelude for the drums and trumpets, as the great procession formed behind the executive and the secretary of the Inquisition. Banners waved. Bells tolled. People rushed from the street to avoid being trampled when the horses squatted on their haunches to spring forward, while the guard sat easily and proudly in richly-embossed, Moor-made saddles. Eight times the great procession stopped to trumpet its command:

That all churches should be closed excepting the Cathedral, where all persons over twelve should meet,

tomorrow, Sunday, and the following Sunday, and the Sunday after, to hear the readings of the Edict of Faith, then of the Anathema.

Next day, while church bells tolled, the drums and trumpets that the stallions led were joined by the meek Orders, clergy in a long file, black friars, the white friars, the brown, the Order of Jesus, the white nuns with lowered veils, the nuns in black with faces framed in white, the nuns in brown, pale women with black shawls, pale men in black velvet and white ruffs. Under the tolling bells, censers swung from the hands of acolytes, and incense rose whitely, softly, thickly, through the sharp, clear whiteness of the atmosphere.

Toledo waited, breathing deeply, for the anger of the Lord to burst. It filed into the great Cathedral. Incense misted in the tree-like summits of the arches, and from the choir singing, and from the mass of kneelers rose the moaning of souls in exile, "How long before Thou takest me, O Lord?"

The dignitaries marched like reapers through ripe, waiting grain. The archbishop let his magnificent hand be kissed, and the smoke of incense, yellow in the torchlight, erased the walls, that were hung with penitential cloaks, and melted back the vaulted ceiling, so that it seemed all heaven was listening:

We, the Inquisitor of the One True Faith, . . . to all, of whatever estate, position or degree, resident or present in this archbishopric, to each one individually this notice is addressed. Let it be known, that since

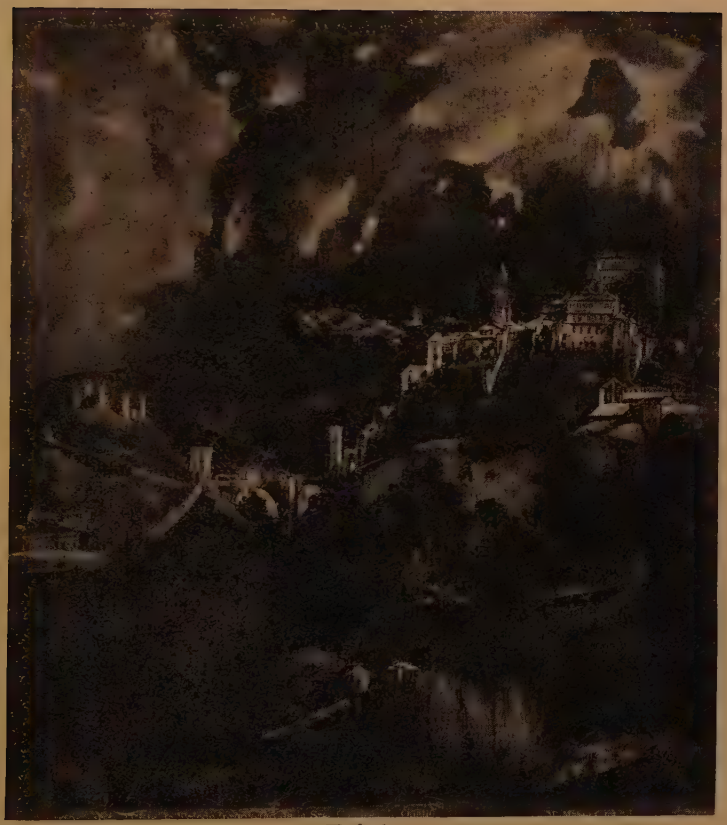
no visitation or inquest has been made in many places of the province by the Holy Office of the Inquisition, crimes against our Sacred Catholic Faith remain unpunished, wrong Our Lord, and prejudice the Christian religion.

In order that we may chastise those who are culpable, we do require and exhort, if anyone has known or heard said that any person, living or dead, present or absent, has done or uttered or believed any act, word, or opinion, heretical, suspect, erroneous, rash, ill-sounding, scandalous or blasphemous, let him reveal it to us.

"Amen, amen," resounded through the church, "cursed be the heretics who impose exile on Our Lord, after having received Him, who make His dear wounds bleed. . . ."

While the great voice continued:

. . . and if anyone has heard anything said in favour of the Law of Moses of the Jews, or the ceremonies of the unholy sect of Mahomet, or the sect of Martin Luther, or any other sects condemned by the Church, or knows of any person having books of the opinions of these sects, or the Koran, or the Holy Scriptures in vulgar tongue, or other books censored and placed on the Index of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and if any know of other diverse heresies and crimes, as keeping or invoking familiar demons; witchcraft; pacts with the devil; marrying in Orders; solicitation of women in confession; bigamy; saying there is no sin in simple fornication, or usury, or perjury, or that concubinage is better than marriage; insulting or



Toledo
El Greco, 1610

maltreating crucifixes or images of saints; disbelieving or doubting any article of faith . . .

on and on intolerably.

In order to end such heresies, we command that all should come before us and declare whether they know if any person has failed to fulfil these obligations, or has persuaded other persons not to come, declare, and manifest what they know touching the Holy Office, or have subordinated witnesses, or have given false testimony, or have concealed or befriended heretics, or have impeded the Inquisition by throwing off penitential cloaks, or non-performance of penances by reconciled heretics, or their saying that they confessed to the Inquisition through fear, saying that those relaxed to the secular arm to be burned were blameless martyrs. Moreover, confessors are ordered to withhold absolution from penitents who have not denounced all offences coming to their knowledge.

Let all, under pain of excommunication, obey this mandate within six days, and better to know the truth, concerning the living and the dead, the secrecy of witnesses shall be safeguarded utterly, and that these summons may be known to all, and none pretend ignorance, we order this publication.

Toledo, this third day of the month of April of the year 1577.

The faithful saw in vision the blackness of a soul in mortal sin, submerged in shadow, deeper than any shadow of this earth, in whose unending darkness filthy reptiles crawled. How bright the glory of the

Lord glowed next to it, and how they feared the Evil, and praised the Good, and pitied the souls in strangulation with the darkness pressing on them, darkness shot with flame, the smell of sulphur in their nostrils! It made each person search his heart for sin, made him remember half-forgotten things about himself, more about others, things that had not seemed wrong at the time, but which in the light of the proclamation were revealed as heinous.

The following Sunday they heard the Edict read again, with an additional Edict addressed to all priests, requiring them at high mass to denounce as publicly excommunicated and anathematized all who had not obeyed the first Edict; sprinkling holy water to drive away the demons who kept them in their toils; and praying Christ to bring them back to the bosom of the Church. If they persisted in contumacy, all faithful Christians were ordered within three days to withdraw from all intercourse with them under pain of excommunication and anathema.

Peace flooded through the faithful hearts, peace that traversed face, breast, and arms, and left them in warm relaxation, murmuring, "Lord, Lord, how long before I am all Thine, and Thou all mine?"

In terror, Jewish women sat behind their looms on Saturday, and when they saw a shadow on the street began to spin. Moorish women tried to suck the henna from their nails, and walked with hidden fingers, trembling and ashamed that their fully unveiled faces were naked to all men. The conscience-stricken won-

dered whether God's law of self-preservation might not possibly offset the Church's law to denounce, when denunciation would mean loss of life, and livelihood, and honour for unlimited generations; and each person feared his neighbour, servant, parent, husband, child, and priest and his own conscience, while the sharp white light, that crumpled the high sky, foretold the Day of Judgment and the dread Anathema.

Then the long arm of the Inquisition that had threatened and had struck with the first Edict, and the second, rose to its full height to strike again. All the city knelt in the cathedral. Those the Inquisition had formerly condemned were set apart from the rest, dressed in the hideous penitential cloaks of sackcloth ornamented with the yellow cross, the mark of shame, and the cloak was made the heavier, and the shame more hard to bear, because they knew that duplicates with their names were to hang perpetually in their parish churches, to be renewed when they were old, never to be hidden by candles or by flowers, in order that no one ever might forget the ineffable stain their sins made on the everlasting generations of their blood.

The cross stood on the sacred altar, hooded in black, with two flaming torches by it, and the priests in profound silence ranged behind, while the Inquisitor declaimed:

We excommunicate and anathematize, in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in form of law, all apostate heretics from our holy Catholic faith, their fautors and concealers who do not re-

heal them, and we curse them that they may be accursed as members of the devil, and separated from the bosom and the unity of the holy Mother Church. And we order all the faithful to hold them as such and to curse them so that they may fall into the wrath and indignation of Almighty God. May all the curses and plagues of Egypt which befell King Pharaoh come upon them because they disobey the commandments of God: May they be accursed wherever they be, in the city or in the country, in eating and in drinking, in waking and in sleeping, in living and in dying: May the fruits of their lands be accursed and the cattle thereof: May they be a scorn to their enemies and be abhorred of all men: May the devil be at their right hand: When they come to judgment, may they be condemned: May they be driven from their homes, may their enemies take their possessions and prevail against them: May their wives and children rise against them and be orphans and beggars, with none to assist them in their need: May their wickedness ever be remembered in the presence of God: May they be accursed with all the curses of the Old Covenant and of the New: May the curse of Sodom and Gomorrha overtake them and its fire burn them: May the earth swallow them alive, like Dathan and Abiram for the sin of disobedience: May they be accursed as Lucifer, with all the devils of hell, where may they remain with Judas and the damned forever, if they do not acknowledge their sin, beg mercy and amend their lives.

Ecstasy had been sweeping through the congregation with stiffness that crept up fingers, hands, and limbs.

Resistance was of no avail. It only added to the violence with which the soul was ripped out of the body to fly apart in bliss, and yet not relieve the corpse of life, but only yield it agony with which to cry:

"I die for want of death!"

The organ filled the huge cave of the church. The choir sang "Deus laudem meam" and "Miserere," while the bells tolled as for the dead, and the bearers of the torches extinguished them in consecrated fountains, speaking above the hiss of fire: "As these torches die in holy water, so will their souls in hell."

Into the white light of Toledo, released and exhausted, sensing the soul crystalline, unable to hide a little sin, or as a perfect diamond complete in brightness, purged of all evil thoughts, knowledge, and suspicion, into the quivering air, the quiet people flooded, weary and relaxed in the deep peace that follows the rapture of a heart transported by the ravishment of God.

And Toledo was at spring. All gardens bloomed. The river swelled, and bird songs mingled with the churches' tolls. Nuns with lowered eyes slid into their walls. Monks strolled to the monasteries, while the smell of incense was still sharp among the perfume of orange flowers. The men grew conscious of the beauty of their simple dress, and those who had followed the court to distant lands remembered how foreign ornament turned shabby beside their elegant simplicity. Women realized if black velvet shoes kept consistently behind their swaying forms, and beggars knew this

was their most propitious day, when spring fell tinkling into emptied souls, and the very sweet richness of the season reminded all that even angels fall, and that glass is quickly clouded by warm breath.

The thickness of the crowd broke, scattering through the twisted streets, and when they felt more free, and more alone, a young girl and an old nun began to talk. The nun, who would have preferred to go with her sisters into the silent oratories to commune, thought of the Mother Teresa, considered a saint even then, while she still lived, thought of her great work to free religious women of this necessity to mingle with the world to earn a little for the monastery. Yet, she was fond of the girl, Gerónima de las Cuebas, at her side. There was a gentle person, probably to come into the convent soon. She seemed about nineteen, the age at which Teresa left the world, and the nun began quite naturally to talk about Teresa, saying she remembered her as a little girl in an orange velvet dress trimmed with black bands, and added: "It is unimportant, isn't it? And yet it gives greater holiness to my thought of her. She teaches us to remember the humanity of Christ, and in the same way I like to think of her person, always gay, giving the example of a glad heart, which offers the Eternal Spouse a happy home."

Their path had taken them along the street of the Tránsito, which ran narrowly between high walls. The side towards the river has since been cleared, and the closed garden with its large house become the public

Paseo del Tránsito. Where the street ended with a sudden opening on a cliff, they stood to watch the way the ragged rock cut down to the flooded river Tagus. The nun thought that she should say life was a dangerous road on the edge of such a cliff, but she looked into the girl's full, oval face, bright eyes, lips rich with all the eager clarity and restlessness of spring, and thought that one might wait a little while. Gerónima seemed too lovely to be in danger of mortal sin. Besides, grace does not come through years of patient work. Grace comes as unexpectedly as death, and even those who fall may return by walking in the way of humility, to taste the delicious forgiveness of the Lord.

The girl turned her back upon the cliff and laughed in luscious laughter, "I love this place. I love to look on the white church of the Tránsito, and think the house that was a synagogue is now a pearl at the feet of Our Lord. I love to worship there. I only wish it had been dedicated to Saint Magdalene. But tell me, Sister Maria, is it true that there is sometimes sinful worship at this place?"

The nun watched the quivering girl and thought that she flickered with more than the motion of her soft dress in the breeze, and yet she stood erect with her head high. It was like fire burning underneath her skin. The old nun answered: "They say that sometimes at night there is strange singing here, moaning Oriental sounds, but whether it is from the old synagogue or the house between it and the river, I do not know. It is an evil house that should have been razed

for its sins. It was owned once by the rich Jew, Simuel Levy, and when he refused to pay his tribute, the king had him killed, and found his garden catacombed, and the caves filled with gold. Then an ancestor of the present Marquis de Villena lived and practised black arts there. The gate falls open often, and it may be that devils still come and call the heretics to those weird rites which make Our Lord's wounds bleed. I wish I might set fire to the house. How can men endure that it remain? Come quickly, Gerónima, or I shall fall down on my knees and pray that lightning level it, and that would be such scandalous excess as the Mother forbids."

She looked at the girl again and hurried on, for the young cheeks were red, and the eyes like torches, and the hair and veil were like the black cloth that had hidden the altar cross, and when Gerónima spoke her voice rang deeply as the tolling of the bells.

In the tall, dark house of las Cuebas, the women talked quietly, and the distaff of the mistress hung on a still string, for she was weary and exhausted from the emotions of the day. The old nun sat beside her with her hands closed on her cross. She was tired also. The fury and elation that had wrung her before the old house in the ancient Jewish quarter had been almost more than she could bear. She wanted to be off by herself in converse with her Lord, but the Señora de

las Cuebas talked to her, while Gerónima stood by the window silently, and yet the young girl's thoughts were talking, too.

The men, of course, were in some pleasure garden, sitting among the almond and the orange trees, drinking and singing and discussing learned things; and what should the women speak of but them? The Señora Louise de las Cuebas rambled on about her husband and her sons: Carlos, who had entered Orders, Jorge, who was a captain of the guard. When she spoke of Jorge, her face flushed with pride and her eyelids lowered. The nun looked up and saw she was indeed a holy woman, for her glowing face was young and beautiful, and yet she seemed to take no joy in her beauty, but dressed herself as though she were already old.

Gerónima could not sit between them, although her chair was there and her tapestry, stretched on its framework, stood before it with the needles and the thread, and she had woven the beasts about the manger and was ready to do the Child; but she stood idly watching from the window because her nerves would not relax. She saw the late sun reach towards the Tagus, but it rested on the granite cliffs and never touched the still, dark water, motionless above the hidden currents. She thought of the tangled enclosure, the place of sinister song beside the Tránsito, remembered the old nun's fury, and thought, "I want to know," and it was as though the nun's voice answered her, "One should not ask to know."

Her mother was telling of the careers of her sons, young for the positions they had attained, with promise to become important men, high in the Church and in the army, the only lives for gentlemen. "We are poor," she said. "All Spain is poor from ceaseless wars." She paused, and let her high poise end the phrase. "My only worry is Gerónima. There are so few families who can prove their cleanliness, prove that there is no taint of Moor or of Jewish blood, and that no ancestor has ever been condemned by the Inquisition; and if Gerónima should marry any but an Old Christian of pure blood, it would not only dishonour her, but my sons would be forced out of all gentle life. I realize this is necessary. New Christians, Moors and Jews of wavering faith, with their frugal lives and cheap labour, have filled all the industries and trades, and if they were allowed to practise honourable professions, there would be no place left for Spaniards, no room for chivalry."

"Moreover," the nun took up, "and worse. Some have succeeded in hiding their taint, and no one can tell how many priests are like the one González who was secretly a Jew for fourteen years, during which time he celebrated mass and granted absolution without intention; or like Fray Garcia, who turned his back on penitents. I moan for the innocent souls of those to whom they ministered—blameless souls that bleed to death while devils sport with them."

"True, the heretic is a pestilential animal, worthy of all punishments of Church and State. They eat

the bread of the good. They render the land infamous; by their conversations they lead souls to perdition, and with their marriages and kinships corrupt the blood of good houses. But their uncleanliness cannot be seen, and no one can make such investigation for a girl about to marry as is made by the military or the Church, and she might as well sleep in a bed of lice as marry a man whose blood is tinged with heresy."

And Gerónima, standing by the window, ended the conversation with quick thought as she had heard it ended in long sentences many times—"so that the only safe thing for her to do is to enter religion, otherwise Carlos and Jorge . . . "

She watched the silver beauty of the scene where olive leaves were satin against granite cliffs and great dark birds poised and circled, dipped and leapt above the unseen currents of the stream that curled below. She thought of the thick habit of the nun encasing her, but it was spring, too tender for thoughts of heavy goods. If only that strange section of the Tránsito had long ago been razed and the land cleared of heretics, there might not be this question. She tried to imagine what weird songs might be sung by dark, veiled women, and by men who were certainly like devils with hidden hoofs and tails, and her full lips parted as she thought of their fantastic rites; then she turned cold with terror and with loathing, and again she heard her mother's voice still speaking of her sons. She felt then that she had no right to jeopardize those

men's careers, particularly Jorge's. How he rode his stallion! How true his arrows cut! Only let him go to fight the Moors. He was only waiting for his chance to kill the infidel as cleanly as a matador his bull. She wished she might ride beside him, but she was nothing but a woman and, to protect her brothers, must become a nun. No matter. However hard the cloistered life might be, it could not be as bad as hell, and it was fleeting—short and fleeting all things of this world—and the reward infinite and eternal, for ever and for ever. "Earthly life is like this momentary light of sunset." Then she caught her breath at the beauty of that light. It sharpened the rocks into gleaming lances. It made the grass turn emerald. Surely when one is nineteen she may wait a little, even if life is sometimes cut off suddenly and ends too sharply. *The bridegroom cometh like a thief in the night,* and those unprepared must wait for ever and for always in lasting torment.

The older women's voices droned. Spring and afterglow, Gerónima could not bear to stay inside. A convent, then, a convent soon if it must be, but meanwhile the gold of evening was too glorious to leave. Small sins may be forgiven. Heaven is won through grace, not works. Early evening was a torture, and she was curious to hear just once the devil-worship, and if they came at her she would raise her crucifix and drive them backwards in confusion, as Jorge would drive back the infidel. She kissed the old nun's hand.

She kissed her mother's head, and went towards her room, but turned and hurried from the house.

Laughing up at her own barred balcony, she ran through the shadows at the gate. Jorge always came home shortly before dawn, and she could wait for him outside the wall. Then Jorge, brother Jorge, his warm lips moist with night, would hide her underneath his long black cape, and she would press against the rippling muscles of his side, waiting for the gate to open at his ring; she would walk up the long staircase, stepping carefully just as he did, and step with his step down the tall, black hall until they'd stop and he would spread his cape behind her while she sprang into her room. For his sake, then, she would become a nun, but after spring was over. Meanwhile, to hear the devil's song.

A moving shadow through still shadows, Gerónima swept down the crooked streets, close by the wall and high above the Tagus. She reached the white church of the Tránsito and leaned against the temple that had been built by the old Jew who had lived in the sinister house. People were walking past her. Men's voices, brutal voices, drunken voices, went and were replaced, while she pressed against the wall, one hand upon her crucifix, while the fingers of the other felt the temple's intricate design, the arabesque of leaves without a single human figure where her hand could rest. The voices were thick, cruel voices, but also they were blind with drink. They would not see her crouching there. She waited for a little space between

the passers; then she would dash to the tangled garden whose gate hung open. There she would raise her crucifix and hear the devils scream, and see them tumble, terrified, into the river.

The road was clear. An instant of cold air rushed black past her eyes. She stood breathless in the garden, hidden by the inside of the gate.

It was darker than she had expected, nor had she thought to find such richness in the scent of growing flowers (the smell of jasmine and the softness of new, wet sprouts beneath her feet) nor the sound in the shrubs of lizards and snakes, or maybe of devils. Something was flying through the leaves, but there was nothing she could see, nothing that she could know, and the gruff voices rasped again outside along the street. She walked in darkness, catching at the twisted branches of low trees, wandering where the Jew had heaped his gold, and where the Marquis de Villena practised necromancy. She wound inward breathlessly, not knowing where she went. Sometimes she found that she was tangled in long strings of ivy vines. Then she touched the cross, whispered an "Ave Maria," untwined the tendrils, and went on. How black it was! She kissed the cross and thought she was not frightened, until she stumbled and bruised herself on the low brick stairs that led from the lower gardens to the house (which was now a white shadow throwing a black shadow over her) and she could not find her cross, but lay with her face to the soil, groping for it, while she seemed to drown under cold waves of fear.

Then she heard faint singing, but did not know whether it was in the garden:

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani"

that deep song which contains the whole agony of the persecuted:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Her hands scurried in terror, searching for her crucifix. It was like no music that she knew, strange, weird, and sad, so it must be evil, and yet the words were the Lord's last and most sacred sigh, and she could not tell if it was sung by angels or by devils, and she was afraid, not knowing good from ill in

"Eli, Eli!"

Her fingers found the smooth, crossed piece of wood. She pressed it to her sobbing lips, looked up, and there, where she had seen the house, she saw that sunset had returned, saw a burst of golden light that held the white dove of God, larger and brighter than any dove of earth, and the Crucified was resting on the Father's knees, while angels stood about and sang *"Eli, Eli."* The white body of the Christ bled from its wounds, but it was beautiful, more beautiful than anything of this world. She stood and looked, and knew that it was not her imagination, for how could she have imagined such holiness as she had never seen? And it could not be evil, conjured by the devil, because of the quality of light. Sunset she had called it, but she laughed at herself. No one could look into the sunset thus and not be blinded. This was more brilliant than

the sunset, yet it did not blind. It was such suave, soft light as could come only from the opening of heaven. She could not kneel, for she was drawn to move toward it. She had no need to touch the trees or stones. Her feet walked firmly over the unknown ground, seeing their way in the darkness, and took her through the open door to the threshold of a large, bare room.

Pale, haggard face with russet hair, with russet beard, dark amber eyes saw the frightened creature stand at gaze, magnificent. He was afraid a motion would make her go, and he could hardly speak the Spanish tongue.

She heard foreign words, and in her fear made the sign of the Cross. He did not disappear.

He said: "I speak the Spanish not at all. Mine is the language of the New Testament. El Greco they call me—Greek."

He had never seen so wonderful a creature. Irene was as a spark of tinsel next to her, and Irene was seven years ago, and even if she had been present, she could not have compared with this doe before him, watching him through startled savage eyes, with sparkling lips that rolled back from the straight line of her mouth, and waves of blood that came and went under her fine transparent skin, a face of ecstasy when it turned towards his picture, and of dark resentment when it looked at him. Oh, soil and sun of spring! He made himself sit motionless and speak to her whose

eyebrows spread like flying birds, while she balanced partly inside the door and partly out.

Once she knew he spoke the tongue of saints and angels, she was less afraid, and the *"Eli, Eli,"* was sung from another place; besides, he did not fear the cross, but tried hard to explain things to her, although she could hardly understand the words he said, but only stood staring at the picture and repeated over and over, "You say you painted that?"

"Wait, and I show," he said, and dashed about the room. Once he even left it, and she could have gone, but when he came back she stood before his picture, and on her face was such a light, it was as though the painted sky contained the sun.

He laid his brushes and his colours at her feet. "You understand now?"

"No."

"It is all there, and here." He held out his white hands. "And here"—he crossed his hands upon his chest. Her eyes were like eyes of a forest thing. Her hair broke and curled above her face like midnight sea on sand, and for seven years of terror he had been alone. Her clothes smelled of soil and incense, and broken strands of grass clung to her feet, and her hands tried to speak his language, gesturing as though she had no right to her own tongue. "You tell me those made that?"

"Those and I. It is like . . . when you make a cake. You know what's flour, and what's sugar, and what's oil. Then you mix them, and you put them in

the fire, but you cannot tell me what is fire, and that is I—Theotocopuli. You know what's that?"

"Theotocopuli?" She shook her head, and when he heard his name in her deep tones, he repeated it, but with the intonation of her breath. "Theotocopuli is that"—he pointed to the dove—"the bird begot of God."

Pointing, he stood beside her, and while she looked she had no thought of fear, and she had no fear when he touched her, but thought only of the hands of God and of the spirit "Theotocopuli." He kissed her full lips for the beauty of their repetition of his name, and again for their yielding to him, and again for his own joy, and the miracle was upon her that made her glad of pain and made her give welcome to the sweetness of annihilation.

Her hands were on his face while his hands bathed in her long hair and his lips moved without speaking. Hands that made that picture, eyes that saw that vision, she let them do whatever they desired, sure that the begotten of the Maker would not do her ill.

Seven tragic years as dark and long as the jungle of her loosened hair, led to that face and made him wish only that there had been more years, more agony to sink in the oblivion of her hair that swirled in ice and fire and in lightning about his hands and head.

It was long ago that voices had ceased singing, long since he had made her understand it is a marvel to have an oval face, with brows that are like the heavenly bird against a cloud, and lips like fertile earth; long

since she knew that there is no possibility of sin where the heart is filled with glowing wonder; and now, when she heard a breeze run through the sky, she twisted her hair quickly. She would have to race the sun to be home before her brother, and even for that, count that he would be unusually late on this night of a holy day. Then what if the whole night were nothing but a miracle and dream that had torn her sweetly? But the face pulsed again beneath her fingers, and kissed her brow and lips; yet when she was in the empty air again, she wondered if it could be true.

She wondered if it could be true the while she ran along the hollow streets, and when she scraped against the walls, and when she tripped, fell, rose and still aching, wondered whether it could have been only her fall in the haunted garden, and a dream. But she could not have dreamed that vision, or the hands that made it grow out of those little pots of brilliant earth, or the eyes that saw it, Theotocopuli, bird of God. "Ave Maria, save me, if it was a sin; and if it was a sin, let me be home later than my brother, that I may know and repent. Ave Maria, dawn is shattering the sky. Ave Maria, I hear the rooster crow. Mother of God."

She lay outside the high wall of her home. Her lips were in the earth. "Pity me, ah, pity me!" She leapt up when she felt a hand on her veil.

"Jorge!"

"Gerónima, you must not do this any more. The

other time I told you so. Next time I'll tell our father. Where have you been?"

"Most of the night waiting for you. It was so stuffy in the house, and so dreary with the nun, I went to breathe the air, and then the gate closed."

"Poor little sister!"

He opened his cloak and she slid into it, but stayed as far from his steely athlete's body as she could.

Since Greco had turned all his love and force and creative energy to art, he found it natural that art should blossom this lovely girl, and when he phrased the thought within himself, he smiled and set his brushes down. He was too languid for the time to work on his picture of the "Assumption of the Virgin." He was painting the transfigured woman rising in reclining beauty, as he preferred to think of her, as restful as in the tomb.

"It is natural," he wrote across a page in Greek, and crossed it out to write again, in Spanish for her sake, "because nature is the greatest miracle." He dated it and put his journal down, leaned back to study his painting, but thought of Gerónima. After his taut years of loneliness, it was more of Gerónima than of the painting that he thought, dreaming that he had earned this right to rest.

"Doña Gerónima," he mused, remembering the way her lips caressed the name Domenicos, and how he

loved to watch its motion on her lips; thought of the sweet dread of the lovers each time they had to part, fearing the high walls and barred windows of her home might lock her in, and the fear made her face become more delicate. "Gerónima," he said, and sat softly back, waiting for her.

But she rushed in breathless, speaking fast, so fast he could not understand her words.

"Say it again, more slowly," and she repeated it through tears, and still he did not know. "More slowly yet, Gerónima," but her words rumbled quick with fear. "More slowly," and when at last he laid his hands about her face and her voice stopped, he said: "I wish I had your language now so you could understand how very beautiful all this is to me, Madonna."

She drew back sharply, and when he saw her horror, realizing at last that he was a barbarian, a foreigner, and heard the vehemence with which she cried out, "Honour," as she told the fear that kept her even from confessional, he realized slowly that there did exist that which is called world—the burial of the individual in humanity, the thought for other people —and that the world was closing in on them. But it was such a little concept, so easy to arrange, that he spoke to her smilingly, almost as to a child: "I know how to take responsibilities, and I love you, Doña Gerónima, and wish that you should marry me. If you want, my friend Herrara will speak for me to your father."

"Herrara?"

"Yes. The one great architect in Spain. The king's architect for the Escorial, the architect who has replaced Vergara on the Church of San Domingo el Antiguo in Toledo."

It had been sweet that she had never asked, and it was still more sweet to tell her that Herrara was his friend, that Herrara believed him to be the finest of all artists, and that the canvas before her was for the high altar of the Church of San Domingo, that was being built, and that those who came to kneel before it would be kneeling before her, Gerónima. "Herrara will tell them I am the greatest painter in the world, and that will be true, but, madonna, before you answer, and I send him, there is one thing more that I must make you understand."

She sat motionless, and her joy bled. She watched the sky above the garden while through his broken phrases he made her know, and made her see him as he had stood when his ship joined the Spanish shore, became part of the land, and he was eager to be off, eager after months at sea to set his feet on the road to court and the new walls of the Escorial. The inspectors came on board—customs, health, and Inquisition—swarmed up from the shore to examine box, bale, and barrel and all persons for dutiable stuff, or heresy. He felt himself encased in language he could not understand, and all he could say was, "Greco, Greek." They held his arms and called the captain to explain. He could not make them keep their fingers from bruis-

ing him. The captain talked a minute, then hurried off to howl that there were only silks in the box, no books by heretics.

The inspector turned to him and asked, "El Greco?"

He nodded. More was said. Some one else was called, but rushed off to protect his merchandise. The officials were breaking each package open in search of books. There was such terror that heretical writings might be smuggled into Spain that not one box was left unopened, and no one had time to look out for the scrawny foreigner when laces might be torn or stolen and water ruin the wheat.

The strange words built a wall between him and the shore, while everyone was busy bribing for a light inspection, bribing for a little care. He did not know what he was asked to tell, nor why they bound him like a criminal, nor why he was taken as a prisoner through the streets and chained to a dungeon wall.

There were four others chained against the walls and crowded in the humid cell. He listened to their voices, tried to learn to understand and speak. They were kind. They did their best to help. When his mind was tired with words, he watched the small, bright light burst in from the window far above, and clatter down their twisted forms. One man had just been brought back from the rack. He lay and moaned. When they had taken off the cords, they found his arm was broken and two fingers gone. They brought him back and left him for his bones to heal and his flesh stiffen to augment the pain of torture when it

should begin again. He lay with his face always turned towards the light, and breathed as though he worshipped it. Another wore the "keep-friend," an iron collar around his neck attached by an iron bar to belts around his waist and wrists. He was sure to be condemned because he had tried to escape. He was a Moor. He was most friendly with the one who was suspected of being Jew on the conclusive evidence that he washed his hands on rising and before meals, said pork made him sick, and refused to eat flesh of animals that had died natural deaths. The last prisoner had eyes that held all beauty and a face that was formed by thought, and he was gagged. When they came to dress him in the penitential cloak and mitre, both decorated with devils and flames, symbols of his sentence, to place the halter around his neck and lead him through the joyous festival of those who served the Faith by burning him alive, still they did not dare remove the gag. It seemed he was a noble, a brave, eloquent, educated man, who had learned the Lutheran doctrines when he went to the court of Austria with the legation to bring back Anne, the king's fourth bride.

After months of waiting, the judges sent for Greco, and the interpreter asked him whether he knew of what he was accused. He did not know. They sent him back and replaced his chains. The same thing happened three times. His cell companions changed, but they were always twisted men in torment, always watching the one high spot of light that broke in yellow

planes and in black hollows down their emaciated forms.

But the Inquisition did allow them all the writing materials they could use, on condition that every page should be returned to the judges. El Greco asked for paper. El Greco drew. With black ink on the white sheet he tried to set those people down in all their terror and their agony, and with that strange spiritual strength that made them prefer to burn rather than to deny their own conceit of God. Whether he had succeeded he did not know, for his work had been taken away, but he paused in his narration to say that he doubted if he had, because it needed colour and it needed calm. "Some day," he said, "I shall express it well."

Finally he was again brought before his judges, and for the last time warned to tell whether he knew wherefore he was suspected of heresy, and when he said he did not know, they warned him once more that the Inquisition did not arrest without sufficient proof, and as he wished for mercy, he should speak before the prosecution presented its report. Since he had no idea of what he was accused, they read the long communication, and his mind was lost in phrases telling him the full gravity of the charge, so that the interpreter had to simplify it, as he called on him to answer each separate count.

"But yes, of course," he admitted, he was a Greek, of the Greek Church.

"Why, no," he said. "It was not apostasy, but the true faith."

He saw his judges grow a deeper red. He did not know what they wanted him to say and, thinking the interpreter must have made a mistake, he spoke to them in Spanish, in the words that he had learned from Jews, Mahometans, and Protestants in his cell. One of the judges became like ash. The rest were burning coals. They held a consultation. They took a vote, and then he was led into the torture-room.

The executioner stripped his long, white body and roped him to the rack. Once again they told him to confess fully, to speak the truth before the executioner should turn the screws. Moreover, they warned him that if he should suffer effusion of blood, or should die, or be permanently maimed in torture, if they should break his legs, or break his arms, or break his hands, it would not be the fault of his judges, but his own stubbornness in concealing truth. Again they told him to speak forth and confess his apostasy.

One thing only he completely understood—*if they should break his hands.* He remembered the mangled man who had been in his cell; that when they took the cords off, they found two of his fingers gone, and he cried out that, if they told him what they wished to know, he would confess.

The secretary took down his words, noted the expression of his face, and when he had finished writing, repeated only the one phrase, "Tell the truth."

Then the executioner began to turn the screws. El

Greco's mind dashed here and there, gathering sparse bright comprehended words from the dark bush of memory, and it placed them all together, and he cried out: "It is true, everything you said is true. Stop tightening."

They stopped, and said once more, "Tell all the truth."

He answered, "I confess apostasy and ask to abjure and to repent."

When they took him off the rack, he sat gazing at his hands. He did not realize what he repeated, nor any of the things they made him swear. He was so meek they allowed him to abjure in private and did not make him wear the penitential coat. He went numbly to the churches as they ordered, attended the masses to which he was condemned, was baptized and received into the Mother Church, but all that he knew was that they had not hurt his hands. It was joy simply to see his fingers bend. He remembered the way rheumatic Titian had lusted for his hands, and he laughed like a crazy person. He had quarrelled with the Greek priests long ago, and left the Church so that he could paint, and all this terror was because they did not know, and he had not understood what those men wanted. He was ill, and so worn down that a nun, on seeing him, had cried: "Look! There goes a holy man, for his body is so attenuated, one would say that it is made with roots of trees!"

Worse than that, though, time was lost. Grapes had been in harvest when he was arrested, grapes were be-

ing carried to the press when he was set free, and he did not know how many times between wine had been made. But they had left him with whole hands. He had not meant the infamies they made him swear about his Church. That did not matter, for his fingers moved. They were supple. They could still control a brush.

"Herrara told me maybe I had been condemned only to the threat of torture, and that I should not have confessed before I felt great pain. He said that any sentence by the Inquisition takes away the thing that they call cleanliness of blood, and that it is important to the Spaniards. It makes me a New Christian, like a Jew. I did not know about that, and I do not know, but he told me never to tell it, unless I thought of marriage, then not to fail to tell, but that I would do better not to think of marriage. But surely to you, the only thing that matters is that my hands are here, Gerónima, my beautiful, most beautiful bride!"

She could not speak, she could not look at him. Her fingers lay above her seedling child, and while he talked, and while she watched the sky, huge black blotches detached themselves from the sun and fell as the tears were falling in her heart. All that she could understand was that his blood was tarnished and that he was a New Christian, like a Jew; that if she should marry him, the contagion would spread. It

would mean disgrace to all her people. Carlos would be driven from the Orders. He who planned to be a dignitary of the Church could not even be a choir boy if she should marry this convert, and Jorge could never drive his sword into the infidel.

In her unhappiness she did exaggerate, for the actual disabilities were imposed only on the direct line of inheritance, but she remembered as she had been taught. Moreover, the hysterical horror of heresy was such that total disgrace would have been imposed on all her family, and marriage would not have helped her child.

She saw her seed irrevocably cursed with a worse curse than that of bastard, while if she did not marry Greco, the child would be hers, hers only. No one need know its father, and its blood would be clean. The dark blots fell down from the sky and spread. She could not bring disgrace into her house. She could not speak, she could not look at him, but rose and walked away, stumbling in clear daylight through the garden that she knew so well.

Leaning against the inside of the wall, waiting for a space of quiet so that she could dash into the middle of the road and walk as though she had been coming from another place, she laid her hand again above the germ of child—aye, tiny thing into which she could not stop the flow of unhappy life, what was to become of it? They would place her in a convent where it could be born in secrecy while she repented. They would take it away, to pretend she was unstained. The

little eyes now in her would want light, and see it coming from the top of a cell. She imagined how light would break over kneeling forms, and she wondered what would become of her child, bred in disgrace and misery, inside of a flowerless wall.

People passed and repassed without stop. She understood a little from thinking of the light, and she began to hope Domenicos would come to lead her back, would plead with her. Herrara thought he was the greatest of all painters, and he had assured her that Herrara was right, but he was a convert, and the stain would spread. She had no right to hinder Jorge and keep him from crusades, or even Carlos, yet the embryo within her, nourished by her flesh, made her tender towards the unloved child. "How beautiful it is to me, madonna," he had said of that which would be hideous to all others. He would make it beautiful. That was his power. Then she thought of how his face had been, and realized that which should have been remembrance.

Because, when Greco saw her walk away, he felt himself a twig that a hand strips. He sat in utter coldness, and he could not think. He had believed her to be so much a part of him that he could not realize she could feel differently. He had offered his whole self, laid himself before her helplessly, defencelessly, and she had walked away.

Very slowly, his lips began to speak: "It had almost been too great a loveliness, rivalling in its beauty

my desire to paint. It had almost made itself an end in life. No artist has the right to love too well."

His mind took up the words: "You almost were untrue to the only thing, to the one unending end. All else may die or despise you, all affection turn away. Of Venice, with its beauty and its love and gaiety, nothing remains except a memory of Tintoretto's painting and of Titian's life. All who you thought loved you have forgotten you, except your art, and art is the only thing which accepts you fully, fully receives all that you love, do, and suffer, that does not recoil even from disgrace, but takes it to itself and uses it. You are complete with such a love in you. It makes you mother, father, child, so that you give and you receive, create and are created, and become the perfect unity in an existence which knows life, but ignores death—in a creation independent of the world."

He stood before his painting of "The Assumption," and saw it as he had not seen it before. He thought it was the work of a man gone blind with love, took up his brushes and his palette, strode to it, but stopped with his brush raised, the broad tuft filled with black and poised before the full form of the Virgin. It was as though he had been about to strike Gerónima. He said aloud: "It is the work of a man blind with love," yet it was himself. No one else could do that clean, sharp line. He could not touch the canvas, but whispered: "Let it keep its love. It marks an epoch which is over, and it is a thing that I could never do again, so let it stay."

He went to his journal. He had loved to set his thoughts before him in this book, to turn the images of his mind to words until his fight to handle words made them beautiful in him, then later to take the pale words up again, see the idea turn plastic, and flame in glowing colour, then to laugh at language and at words. The pages opened where they had last been closed, with "Nature is the greatest miracle."

That was the one thing that he would blot out. Then, no. Nothing could be erased from life. All must be absorbed and used. With the sharp pain of continuing to write in Spanish: "The thing is to understand her. The wonder is she makes you true even to yourself and art, which is a greater miracle than love."

He underlined it, crossed his elbows on the table, and laid his forehead in the cross of his arms.

Gerónima had reached understanding. She did not know whether it was quiet outside the gate, but only that she could not risk going home and being locked inside her room, behind the window that was barred, and she began to feel the joy of having child, all life circling within her, and with Domenicos it would be complete. "I wish that you should marry me." If she must not marry him because of Carlos and Jorge, she could be with him always, always, and they would raise the child in love, and nothing else would matter except his supple hands, and that he, who was the greatest artist, wanted her and called her beautiful, most beautiful bride. She was happy with the thought

of him, happy with the breeze on her face and the breeze in her hair, and she stood a moment while the breeze wrapped her clothes around her as though it were his arms, and in that moment thought only of the joy on his face when he would see her returning, because she held her love of him higher than her soul or honour. She moved like deep, rich laughter towards the house, walking with head back, lips open, cheek-bones high. Leaves and vines swung after the swift motion of her feet, and bees swarmed behind her as she went.

She saw him leaning on his long, crossed arms, saw his frail, white, hanging hands, helpless since she had left him. He had not heard her enter. He did not hear her walk to him. In ecstasy she knelt and kissed those hands. She pressed them tight about her face.

El Greco saw her on her knees before him, babbling over his hands, heard her whisper, "Keep me with you always, always!"

He stood above her and was distressed to see her on the ground beside his feet, to see her like a dog caress his hands. He was pained by her joyous self-abasement. Against her will he raised her to stand beside him and, with all kindness and all tenderness, held her delight.

El Greco painted. That is the whole of any great artist's life. He painted. Something happened. He

painted more. Evenings when he could not paint, he read or drew—not sketches for his pictures, for colour was so intrinsic a part of his design that he seldom thought of it in black and white—but he read books of architecture, and made drawings of façades, some of which Herrara used.

Doña Gerónima sat outside the firelight and watched the two men bend over a draft—the great architect, stubby-bodied, stubby-nosed, the well-knit scientist beside her long, slender, nervous man, whose face was always changing, light and shadow, and she would have thought it was the fire's quivering, had it not been that Herrara's face so seldom changed, only he would say, "Yes." Then Greco's face would light. She held her weaving in between it and the fire, and still his face would light, and he would laugh and say he loved the exactness of architecture, the precision of building buildings, and the absolute dependency on rules. "Still, when I set up a canvas I cannot think of rules."

Then Herrara praised him, and Gerónima was glad, even though her home was closed against her, and inside the locked walls where she had spent her childhood her parents would not permit the mention of her name. "No," she told herself, she should not think about her people, excepting Jorge, who came sometimes in secret and spoke of those whom she longed to see, she should not think of them. Even the saints had had to renounce father and mother to follow Him.

El Greco liked to have her near him when he modelled clay, and she was happy when he told her to put

down her silly work and take a pose; and when he called her beautiful, it was pure joy.

She loved to watch his hands twist out forms, making earthen models of figures he intended to paint. She could see the pleasure of his muscles and his skin as the figures drew out and, as they grew and rounded, she could feel the child rounding to life within her womb, and she was glad, although the priest had told her to sorrow for her sin. The holy father had not seen saints as Greco had. She thought of changing her confessor, told herself she was a weak, ignorant woman to question the priest's word, and yet the holy father seemed to lack understanding. She wanted a learned person, but sometimes even the learned did not understand. She sighed and for the moment let the matter go, because El Greco held a figure up before him and laughed. When she asked him the reason for his laughter, he could not explain. He never could. If he tried, he said something about when Michel Angelo used paint, he did not have modesty enough to put it where it would be destroyed. Then he wrote in his journal. She watched him screw his lips, wrinkle his whole face, and loved the effort he made to express: "If, as Buonarroti said, sculpture is the torch of painting, then that means in shadow sculpture is great; but in light, colour must take the place of thickness."

He showed it to Gerónima. The heavy-bellied girl found the thought too intricate for her sluggish eyes, and watched him softly, while he tried to make it clear, her mind upon the motion of his cheek-bones under

ivory skin. When Greco saw she did not understand, he stopped explaining, even when she asked, but only held the little statues up and laughed at them; and she would see his laughter and would smile, feeling that it was taking life in her, all his moods and all his genius playing over the child as his fingers played over the clay. When he took a knife and cut in wood, she marvelled to see the whittled slabs grow thicker than themselves. He painted them, and they became flying angels to her wonderment. But his carving was only of small things to decorate his canvases, little figures on the frames, and he often laughed while cutting them, "the torch, of the torch-bearer." Other times he drew figures for Monegro to sculpture, said, "Monegro, favourite of the king, but I'll make an artist of him yet." He laughed at kings and sculptors; "like a woman, he takes the germ," and then he kissed Gerónima, and sat beneath her with his head resting on her lap, and she was happy tangling his russet hair.

But when in daylight Greco painted, that was a different thing, that was a thing that made the whole house quiver with the brightness that grew within it. She thought he was like a matador, with the precision of his brush, and the violence and the force. If a sound should turn his thought from the canvas, something would end. The light would go suddenly from his face. He would be ill. It was as though a god were killed within him. Christ must suffer when the wonder died. When El Greco painted, Gerónima existed only

to protect him, although he did not know if she was there. She took off her shoes and ran barefoot around the edges of the house, quieting the servants in the kitchen, quieting the gardener in the yard, telling her maid to stop her weaving, turning away all people who might come to the house, for El Greco was painting and had to be left in peace, while the white fury in him grew into astounding brightness and was spent, and he, in the expenditure of power, thinking himself most strong in the midst of everlasting beauty drawn from the skies to spread upon the earth, he, as the channel of the foretaste of unending bliss, he, in the expression of energy, was most weak, most fragile, most adored. Then let the world be still while Greco works, let it lie in silent jubilation, waiting for the ecstasy to come, and when it is over, then Gerónima will lay her arms about him and give him rest and give him peace. If the world did turn against her, and if God Himself is to condemn her to everlasting fire, it will not be too great a price for her joy in giving peace; peace, where her arms had given more than peace; rest, where she had been much greater than all rest.

El Greco had forgiven her, saying there was nothing to forgive. She could only wait and hope for more, praying he would forget her moment's hesitation, or come to a realization of her agony in the garden. Perhaps that would come after she was no longer heavy-bellied and heavy-eyed. Perhaps she should do as Herrara told her—go away. He offered to send her

to his parents until after the birth of the child, where she could forget a little that her own home was closed against her.

"When I sorrow for my people," she said, "I sin, and all men may mock me, saying I began to build what I was not able to finish. I must hate my father and mother to follow him, leave them out of every motion of my mind, and when I care for him enough, do you think he will forget?"

Herrara kissed her hand and said it would be best for Greco that she should go away. Her presence made a scandal. She should go, and stay awhile, a year, or perhaps more, and he would see what he and Monegro could do for Domenicos. They would present him to the king, and if she stayed away long enough to seem outside of his control, that would satisfy the requirement for marriage of a woman who had been seduced, and they could pretend that they were married, as long as his sentence and conversion remained unknown, and so end the scandal; only she must go. He was afraid of real trouble if she stayed.

She said: "I shall not be a hindrance to him," and left, grateful that God had pointed out this penance for her sin.

El Greco let her go with soft regret. It would be lonely without her in the house, but he thought that he had ended sharp adventures, distant travels, and had begun the long journey into himself, knowing that it did no good to set his feet in different countries, or

his heart in other people, for the world is round, and all roads return to the beginning, to the self.

El Greco painted while Gerónima was away. He was working on a picture of the "Despoliation of Christ" for the Cathedral of Toledo, and when he grouped the figures around the suffering Lord, a memory came to him of light in a cell, sharp light falling from above, crashing over broken forms. Herrara spoke about the strange dramatic sky, Monegro praised it, and El Mudo turned away.

El Mudo, the dumb painter, known as the Titian of Spain, was the king's favourite artist, commissioned to do most of the work for the Escorial, but he painted in Toledo, as most of the artists did, because of the excessive interest of the king, who liked to be a friend of skilled workmen, was flattered to be mistaken for one, and loved to throw his arm about a painter's shoulder and give advice, feeling he directed each detail of the canvas as he directed each detail of military campaigns and each small occurrence in his realm. And Toledo, with the quiet dignity of the recently abandoned capital, of the Visigothic city grown old in inactivity, received them over its golden bridge, into its high walls.

It was all the better for the artists that the city's decadence had begun. If many people had been driven from their homes, that only meant great houses were

standing empty and that the owners would give them nearly rent free, rather than have them closed. If two-thirds of the people were without work and could not earn enough to eat, that meant cheap service and cheap models. If locked houses crumbled in decay and fell, churches rose to take their places, and churches needed statues and pictures, and churches had increasing wealth, for the only way to assure a livelihood was to enter Orders, and the only way to be sure of retaining the purity of blood was to renounce marriage and enter a monastery. So, while the population died from lack of weddings and baptisms, new churches, with bare walls to be covered, grew, and the new Cathedral of Toledo was recognized to be the richest in Christendom, and the archbishop and the church had a greater income than all the rest of the city. There was no tax on goods sold in the open market which each Tuesday heaped the square with fruit and flowers, fowl and game, fresh oil and honey, bacon, cheese, so the crowds came in from the country in bright-coloured peasants' clothes. Other days there were only city people in the streets, all dressed in silk and velvet, fur and lace; for, with the insecurity of life and property, since no one knew at what moment his money would be taken for a foreign war, or when a careless word would deliver him into the hands of the Inquisition (which meant confiscation of goods, and the confiscated money not required for wood for executions, would be turned to bull-fights and other festivals), all the vanities flourished—taverns, theatres, brothels, pleasure-gardens,

and as much care was given to costume as to the soul. Elegance swarmed the narrow, crooked streets that were solid with shops of goldsmiths, leather-cutters, dyers, potters, weavers of cloth, silk, and embroidery, sword-makers, armourers, jewellers, damascene workers. Closed carriages wound round the wider streets, and nobles rode tall horses that champed at silver bridles, all prancing to the green shores and fertile meadows by the Tagus, where ships from distant lands came, through the port of Lisbon, up the river to this, the heart of Spain. As the ships sailed by, Toledans strummed guitars and sang while entertainers danced in the closed gardens on the islands in the stream. They sipped refreshments drowsily under apricot and olive trees. What matter if the mills turned slowly, grinding less and less, while dancers beat their tambourines and musicians played their flutes? Why care for the things of the world? Think rather of the after-life, and fish, and talk delightfully, passing this little time in joyousness without mortal sin.

In Toledo, no one bothered about the sumptuary decrees the king proclaimed almost daily to limit extravagance, and in Toledo artists did not hear the suggestions of the king, but painted with the memory or the hope of his encouragement and the thought of his arm about a shoulder. So, although El Mudo worked at a day's journey from his king, it was not without consciousness of the sovereign's presence. He had seen the royal arm thrown over other shoulders, and the sight was not agreeable. He was the Spanish Titian,

and when he saw the canvas on which El Greco worked, he turned away. The painting held the memory of Venice in its luxury of colour, mingled with the brutality of El Greco's first sight of Spain, and it had the force of Tintoretto, whose art El Mudo scarcely knew, but the powerful composition that was like a triumphant march forward to the Cross made him feel uncomfortable, as Titian might once have felt. El Mudo had been long enough in court to know the importance of care in choosing friends.

"I am sorry to lose him," El Greco said. "Not that I care so much for his painting, but I do like the way he talks about art."

He missed the walks they used to have together, when one would stop suddenly to frame a portion of the landscape in his hands, cut it from the rest by the round of his palms, and weave his fingers before it, like an intricate design of figures; but he could not think too much of the mute, for he was working on the canvas, and making the Cathedral Chapter pay enough for his living while he painted, and enough for his materials, and making them increase the amount so that he could send more and more money to Gerónima. He liked to think that he surrounded her with all things rich and beautiful while she gave birth to his child. He had given her so little else, he did not want her to desire anything without having it, and he wished the child to grow in consciousness of beauty even before its birth. The sending of more money became almost as great a passion as the laying on of

paint and seeing his figures advance out of the brick-red canvas. Let all the wealth of the Church be laid before him; it could not pay for his picture of the mystic, suffering Lord. As he painted the attenuated face, he remembered other eyes turned in agony and adoration towards the one far light descending into the deep cell; then he thought of consolation, and painted the three Marys, the Magdalene in memory of Irene's gold hair, while Martha's gentle sister had Gerónima's face.

Gerónima. The child. He wrote shyly that there had been a Manuel, of the house of Theotocos, who had brought the name from Constantinople to Crete. Then he sent word to the Cathedral that he must have more money. The house must be made beautiful for her return. He bought a huge carved walnut bed and a crimson damask canopy, and books. He needed money. An artist must live with beautiful things.

It was about this time that he gathered up, as servant, Juan Preboste, a strange, long-necked, angular creature, whom he found gazing at the sky, with arms raised in melancholy adoration and a queer look on his emaciated face. El Greco often saw him here and there about Toledo, standing so rapt and still in some such difficult pose that he sketched him without his noticing. Often times he found him asking alms, or begging work, and as the boy wore the *sanbenito*, or penitential cloak of those sentenced by the Inquisition, El Greco knew that he could have his services simply for his food, and took him in. Juan was a

frightened animal, with words always boiling underneath his lips, and when he seemed about to talk, he turned and ran away. Then, one evening when Greco sat studying his canvas, he became conscious of the boy lying face down at his feet, caressing his velvet shoes, and talking with his forehead to the floor.

"You who know everything. You who paint the saints and read books of philosophies, tell me, who am an ignorant ant, a worm, and cannot keep imaginings away."

He mumbled on that he had been a cowherd of San Ramon, near Talavera, and had often sobbed all night under the stars while the herd slept beyond the bonfire, but he had never known the reason for his grief until the shepherds who brought their flocks up into the hills came talking of the burning of heretics in Seville for the strange new Lutheran doctrines. He listened, and it seemed very beautiful to him to think that salvation did not depend on the pope, or priests, or images, or pilgrimages, but on faith and love of God and of one's neighbour, charity and good deeds. These ideas had fixed themselves in the cracks of his brain until he dreamed them into the brilliance of the stars and the motion of the cattle's legs at night, and he could hardly wait to drive the beasts out of the high hills and tell his wife and friends how wonderful it was. But when he spoke, his wife clapped her hands on their daughter's ears and told him to be quiet. His neighbours cautioned him to keep still, but he could not control his fancies and was brought before the

Inquisition, where he told freely of his imaginings, he was so happy when anyone would listen to him talk. He said that the inquisitors were kind to him, and when they saw he could not cast out his beliefs, they called physicians, who bled and purged him, but it was no use, until the feast of the conversion of Saint Paul, when a priest, who was his cell companion, read him from his breviary and he was convinced. Two of his judges had voted that he be *relaxed* to the secular arm and burned, but he was only condemned to wear the penitential cloak and to perpetual imprisonment in Toledo, which meant to be turned loose in the streets to make his way or starve.

"But now," Juan said, "my imaginings return, and all those evil thoughts seem beautiful again."

El Greco saw the simple creature at his feet gaze up at him through dog-like, adoring eyes, and realized that he was telling of a return to heresy, which meant certain death by fire. He shouted: "We are put here for our sins. It is not for us to make the world like heaven."

Juan fled in terror, but his imaginings came back so strong he had to talk. El Greco told him to come to him each time his fancies were too big to hold, but to speak to no one else about them.

He enjoyed the intense, sweet fellow, and as he could not bear the sight of the *sanbenito,* Juan kept it in a tight roll under a bush at the edge of the garden, and only threw it on when he went out of the gate. To be rid of even that, El Greco sent word to the

Cathedral that he could live on less money if he used this man's work, than if he had to employ a better Christian, only they must let him shed the yellow coat. Although the request was not answered, when less money came Juan sometimes forgot to wear the cloak.

El Greco finished the "Assumption," and set it in the high altar of San Domingo el Antiguo. He laid aside the canvases he had started for the lateral walls. All this was his first commission, and very badly paid. He needed money, for the child was born and Herrara's mother wrote it was a delicate, lovely boy, whom Gerónima had wanted to name Jorge as well as Manuel, and she was very ill. Later Gerónima wrote about Jorge Manuel, and of herself she said that she had been so near to death that she remembered awakening with the taste of oil of the extreme unction on her lips. There could be no question of her returning for the time, and El Greco could not go to her. He had spent his borrowed money on a richly inlaid sword.

He brought his canvas for the Cathedral to a great conclusion. Force, strength, brutality crashed about the mystic Christ, majestic power of love. No one had ever known that high lights, quivering like flame up a dark base, could mean so much. He took it from the easel, looked at it from every angle, and when he had seen it, and seen others look, he wrote to Gerónima:

I shall come for you in a fine coach that I have chosen, as soon as the picture is valued and I am paid, because it

is the finest thing that I have ever done, and is worth an inestimable fortune. Other generations will stand before it . . .

As it was the custom that the artist and the buyer should each have men plead their cases before an arbitrator who should decide the value of the work, therefore, on the fifth day of July, 1579, El Greco's counsel pleaded before Montoya silversmith, sole arbitrator without appeal, that "it appeared to them that, according to the size and excellence of the picture, and the story it contained, its value was so great that it had no price nor estimation; but considering the hard times, and the miserable condition of the realm, and the price at which similar works were held, that they would award for the picture, and the occupation, and the industry and the art, and the cost, and the time consumed, nine hundred ducats at three hundred and seventy-five maravedis to the ducat to the said dominico."

The Cathedral Chapter answered, with the all inclusive fury of the overcharged: "In view of the excessive estimation and price asked by those pleading for dominicos, that the said canvas, as it is painted, is worth about two hundred and twenty-five ducats, because of the indecencies it contains which offend the story and insult the Christ, such as the four or five heads placed above the Christ, and the two helmets, and the presence of the Marys which is contrary to the Evangile, which says they were not present in this place."

After days of consideration, the arbitrator said that

"he had listened to the pleadings of the two sides, as well as to the opinions of other people of knowledge and judgment, and that he had seen the picture, and found it the most beautiful that he had ever seen, and if he were asked to estimate, considering its many good parts, he would estimate it at such value that few, if any, could pay the price; but, considering the bad times, and that which is usually paid in castile for paintings by great artists, that the Cathedral should pay said dominico teococopuli three hundred and seventeen du-eats, and as to the impropriety of the Marys, that he would leave the question to theologians to decide and declare."

When El Greco was notified of this decision, he said he would answer, then told Herrara that, if he gave it for that price, it was only that he needed money and that he would consider the work pawned, and he would buy it back, for it was worth all the wealth of miserly Spain.

"Rather say the extravagance of bankrupt Spain," Herrara told him, explaining that Spain's famous riches were only memory and bluff. The treasury was empty, the people already overtaxed, and so much land had been confiscated and mismanaged, that no crops grew. The Moors, who were the agriculturalists of Spain, had revolted and been crushed and driven from their homes, and although their presence and their wanderings could be traced, as those of underground streams, by the green that followed them, yet, it takes years to build a field, and the king himself had been

forced to break his own laws and embargoes, and to buy wheat from his enemies. The problem of slaying hunger was so untouched, that one could count that most men starved under their velvet coats. "If there is any wealth in Spain, it is in the Cathedral which you are setting out to fight."

El Greco did not answer Herrara or the Church, and his silence frightened the Cathedral Chapter into realizing that he had the picture in his power, as well as the advance that they had paid him. It appealed to the courts of Toledo, saying he should be compelled to do as the judgment decreed, remove the improprieties, particularly the women, who, the Bible said, were far off, and he had painter near. It added: "since the said dominico has received a hundred and fifty ducats on account, and holds the painting, and is a foreigner, and, as everyone knows, the work he came to do in this city, which is the high altar for S^to. domingo el viejo, is completed and in place, and he does not have to remain in this city, and he has no property in it, we demand that he give security, or that he place the picture in the church and do the things which he has been adjudged to do."

When the judge asked him if these statements were correct, El Greco admitted that he was a foreigner without property in Toledo, and that he had received a hundred and forty-six ducats on which to work and live, and added, to everyone's surprise, that he was not obliged to give any account of why he came to Toledo,

and that to whomsover asked him, he would reply that it was none of their business and had nothing to do with the case. He stood before the court, pale with the fear of unearthing the Inquisition record, and knowing that now he had to keep Gerónima away.

The court's fury curled around him, and his brain forgot the Spanish tongue. He was again entering Spain, a stranger and afraid. Then there was a pause, waiting for him to reply. He asked that they should give him a copy and translation of the proceedings, because he did not understand Castilian well.

The Cathedral had taken up again that he was a foreigner and should give security. The court told him to name a lawyer to follow the case, and notified him of the injury to which he exposed himself, in that he attested a thing which seemed untrue, and that "he should answer what he was called upon to answer." The judge gave as a last order that "the said dominico teococopuli should give security, or place the picture with a depository, or in fault of one or the other, that he should be imprisoned."

El Greco's memory was led down the dark, winding corridor into the subterranean cell, to be again chained with five others in their filth. Perhaps, on the plea of the Cathedral, to fall into the hands of the Inquisition on the question of dogma. Herrara agreed when he spoke to him, even added to his fear, and told him no foreigner could have a chance against so powerful an enemy.

Greco wrote the statement: "The picture is finished, and an order made regarding what has to be given me for my work and time spent thereon, and therefore all that remains to be done is that I be paid what the treasurer has been ordered to give me, and I am prepared to remove from the said picture whatever they may wish removed therefrom, thus putting an end to all litigation and the matter of the security required from me."

But the Marys were necessary for his canvas and he would not move them. He might promise to efface them to avoid a humid prison, but he would not do it for a coach, or even to see his wife and child, although it was October, almost two years since Jorge Manuel was born. The Cathedral was quiet about the improprieties as long as its money lay untouched in its vaults, so that the Marys are there yet, and Greco was not paid until two years later, when he could make the demand with the full authority of his status as painter to the king.

El Mudo died that winter, which also marked the death of the king of Portugal, who left no heir, but many pretenders to the throne, among whom Philip II of Spain was the most powerful. Let the Portuguese object that no foreigner could be their lord. He answered that a Spaniard could not be called a foreigner in Portugal. He wanted the port of Lisbon, facing the New World, and a better port than Cadiz in which to equip a fleet to send against that red-haired viper,

Elizabeth of England, whom he had loved. How well supplies would travel the long Tagus from Toledo, heart of Spain, to turn against that evil woman; and while he planned his tragic expedition into Portugal, he arranged that the scaffoldings of the Escorial should not stand idle when he was away. All workmen could continue, excepting for the painter who had died; but his architect, Herrara, and his sculptors, Monegro and Leoni, had said good work was being done in Toledo by a man known as "The Greek."

When the order, frames, and measurements were given to El Greco to paint the story of San Mauricio for one of the high altars of the royal monastery, he had no money and no paints, and although a whole splendid future seemed to lie within the barely opened doors of the great Escorial, he preferred to risk losing that than claim his due from the Cathedral, and have to move the Marys. He hardened himself with the memory of Titian, left for years unpaid by this same king, answered that he could not undertake the work for lack of funds, and when he wrote Gerónima, "The king will buy your coach," it had been a long time since he or Juan had eaten anything.

El Greco's letter became a small part of the prior's report, and the prior's report was one of many, and the king was troubled over a quantity of things. As he liked to make his decisions quietly in private, he told

his secretaries to draw up their memorandums and leave them in his cabinet.

April night of 1580, King Philip II walked through the still Escorial after vespers had been sung and the royal monastery was asleep, except for the guards circling it, and himself, and the secretary who followed him down the granite halls to his brocaded room. Carved jasper and carved ivory decorated his majestic cell. A heap of papers lay upon his table, and he leaned back to look at them, content. The Emperor Charles, his father, had taught him to trust no one, but to hold each thread of the great monarchy in his own hands. Besides, he loved to write as much as he hated to talk with people. When he felt eyes on his face, his words came sharp and bitterly out of thin lips, arid as the rocks of Spain, and he felt that men resented him; but alone at night, seeing his long quill trail black fluid over the white page, he was all king and artist. Gradually as he worked, he seemed to stand before his Maker and present his report. Then he felt the Father's hand was on his head, and sometimes he even felt His arm around him and heard a voice that said, "I am content."

He took up the first sheet. Urgent to give orders for the army that was to precede him into Portugal. The sun had set over those domains, and in the morning the army was to start, guided by its shadow, go to make way for him, his queen and the entire court to

follow. Instructions to the leaders: Get rid of the pretenders, but do not kill where you can bribe.

The money needed for the whole affair. The Genoese bankers charged excessive interest. Besides, a storm had forced their last shipment of gold into English ports, and Elizabeth had kept the money, saying she could use it. The local Spanish legislatures claimed the people could bear no further tax. Well, they had to.

He wrote:

The royal treasury is quite exhausted, all the patrimony drained and consumed, the royal revenues spent, sold, pawned and transferred, and His Majesty unable even to meet the ordinary expenditure of his royal state, much less the extraordinary calls upon him. Although His Majesty, with his invariable desire to relieve these kingdoms, has endeavoured to resort to other means of raising money, he has been unable to get the great sums he needs, and all he has obtained has already been spent. Unless the people are liberal, religion and the State are in danger.

Then he wrote the Church officials to instruct the priests at mass and in confession to urge their lambs to give.

Troubles in Flanders, led by William of Orange, who had been his friend, and the Jezebel Elizabeth sending her pirate lovers to ravage Spanish ports. Perhaps that virgin princess was still piqued that he had married immediately after she only half refused

him. That comes of giving crowns to women. English Catholics asking his help. They promise to submit to Spain. Mary Stuart disinherits her son for heresy and names Philip as her heir. Although Mary was a prisoner of Elizabeth, Philip promised Spain would help the Catholics on his return from Portugal.

From France, the Guises prayed for help against Catherine de' Medici. Philip did not trust the Guises, but since they now promised to submit to him, he assured them of arms and money after Portugal. Arms and money, although Moorish pirates terrorized the Mediterranean, and the silver fleet from the colonies had, as usual, been seized off the Azores by English privateers, like Drake.

Philip laid aside the documents and saw the clear, dark night fill his window with endless stars. The arid land beneath the high-set palace stretched soft, blue, and quiet. The secretary's head lay sideways on his ruff, and the king smiled and ran his fingers through his yellow hair. He read the message from the pope, promising to finance Spanish aid to the Irish rebellion, but the money was to come only after Philip's soldiers had landed. The king, known as "the prudent," mused that the pope was more prudent still, and he turned his thought to the All Father, who must be content with His consecrated, who did not stop at compromise or prudence in matters of the Faith.

Next came the report of the prior of the monastery, Philip's one indulgence, his Escorial. His hand caressed the paper. He read it slowly, making marginal

notes, changing small words here and there for the sake of clarity or rhythm. Ivory and exotic wood had arrived from the colonies, but a painter had not begun his work because . . .

But there must be no delay on this building, which was his palace, church, and tomb.

King Philip wrote the venerable prior of the monastery:

Charge was given some days past to Dominico Teotocopuli, Greek, painter, resident in Toledo, to paint the story of San Mauricio and his companions . . . and since it has been related to me that, for want of fine colours and money with which to work on this project, he is doing nothing about it; and since it is fitting that in my service things should be done as promptly as possible, we order that of such fine colour as there may be, you give him some of those for which he asks and may require, particularly ultra-marine blue. . . .

He paused over the word, softened by the thought of ground lapis-lazuli laid on his granite walls. He envied the man who was to use that paint. He envied men who could spend their days alone writing or painting, and he envied the monks he heard chanting matins, and yet he was the kingliest of kings. The midnight sky was almost black. The moon broke through it and spread silver blue on the white plain. Envy is a sin, and it is a sin to groan beneath the burden God has given one to bear. He could not abdicate as his father had, because he had failed to raise a son who was fit

to rule. Don Carlos had died mad, and Philip, Prince of Asturias, was a young, weak, indolent lad. The king turned back to his writing about El Greco's needs.

And as to the money which he demands, communicate with Fra Andrés de León to arrange with him as to how much can conveniently be given to support him during the time that he is occupied with this work, and to provide him with the necessities which may be required, and to go on giving this from time to time, so that he may not stop, nor fail to continue with the work, and that he should not make this an excuse to cease painting. . . .

The pen trailed on, Philip dreaming of the beauty these words were to create, and he wrote languidly, at ease, letting phrases repeat themselves before the heap of unanswered official letters, until, to jerk himself out of his pleasure, and to awaken himself, he ended the letter, sharpened his voice, and cried, "Sprinkle this with sand!"

The secretary, torn suddenly from sleep, heard the order, saw the paper, and sprinkled it with the contents of the jar nearest to his hand, which happened to be ink. He shrieked with terror as he saw the dark liquid spread.

The terror recalled Philip to his kingliness, and he smiled gently, saying: "It would have been better to have used sand," then quietly rewrote the order in favour of the young Greek, who was pacing Toledo in a state of nerves about his jars of paint and the

coach he wanted, before King Philip turned to the next paper, studied it, and replied:

I cannot consent to your demand for the expulsion of the Moors. They have already been driven from their homes, and while they bear the greatest burden of taxation and work the worthless land, they raise the only grain we have, and they make the only bridles worthy to be used.

Philip wrote on through the paling night, finished the pile of letters, and reread. Directions to assassins and diplomats. The great plot with Mary Stuart to deny her son, whom Elizabeth would later name as heir. The plot with the French Catholics which Henry of Navarre was soon to end by a cynical baptism that would unite the realm. Protection of the Moors, which would terminate with his own life. Plans for the journey into Portugal, uniting two thrones, soon to separate.

The night sky thinned and split into clear day. The trumpets of the army sounded. Philip stood at his casement to review the troops who marched away under glittering helmets to the roll of parade drums, proud Spanish banners flying, broad-breasted horses dragging artillery, while the dust rose behind them, and the shadows led over the broad white plain to Portugal.

Morning mass was ended. Hammers began to pound in the continual construction of the monastery. Everyone was busy. The secretary sorted the night's work. It was a constant source of surprise and regret

to him that the king, who held all Spain within his hand, whose life and strength were the very nerves and muscles of the realm, whom no one could replace in any detail—that this most absolute monarch should dissipate his strength worrying over ultra-marine blue for an impudent, upstart foreigner.

No one could know then, or even guess, that this insignificant order was to be the sole part of the whole night's labour to bear lasting fruit.

"But coaches are only for great ladies," Gerónima wrote, and arranged to travel with some Carmelites who were going to their convent in Toledo; yet she took in her El Greco's dream of pride and wealth.

They started on a late spring morning, that was weighted by a quantity of suspended rain. The little nuns, robed in white, with white veils covering their faces, spoke softly to one another. Gerónima saw the white stuff suck against their nostrils with each breath, and thought "how suffocating in this oppressive atmosphere." The grinding of wheels beneath her, and the murmur of voices not addressed to her, made her lonesome.

The child, Jorge Manuel, was restless. The nurse was busy trying to keep his feet from soiling the nuns' pure robes. He asked, "Why can't I see their faces, María?" He begged the servant to hold him up so

that he could watch the road through the high, barred window, and when her arms were tired, he whined.

The nurse explained to Gerónima, but loudly, to be heard by the nuns: "He did not sleep all night, he was so excited looking forward to the drive. He may have a little fever."

Gerónima took him in her arms and ran her hand across his head. He caught her wrist and begged to see the ladies' faces, and begged to see the road. Gerónima bent close to him and whispered in his ear stories of the saints, and of his father who knew how the saints looked, and who would make their pictures for him; and as she talked she thought that after many things she would say to his father, "But you have not asked to see Jorge Manuel, and he is over two years old." More than two years! Then he would say again, "How beautiful it is to me!" Soft russet curls like his. She kissed her baby's forehead, laughed at his eyes that were so tired from a night of expectation, so disappointed at veiled faces and a shut-in car, eyes too bright and burning, and yet unwilling to be closed. She smiled even at his petulance, and he smiled back, clutched her finger, and fell so suddenly to sleep that a nun's voice was caught saying, " . . . and he divided my communion wafer with Sister Loretta, although he knows how much it means to me to have a large piece. . . ."

It stopped, and there was silence. Gerónima spoke to the servant, who did not hear her, then she closed her eyes.

Heat in the shut omnibus. Stuffiness. Fluttering sound of lifting veils, and she did not wish to raise her eyes and see the veils drop down. The voices came much clearer. She remembered she had almost been a nun.

Then a voice from body and lips so detached from the world that it was more like a church-bell ringing than any earthly sound: "The only difference between human and divine love is the object."

But another: "Excepting that the one is so much easier, and so passing, while the other is eternal, and real in its reward."

Gerónima sensed their eyes on her and on the child. She felt unprotected, being studied with her own lids closed, and yet she wished to listen to these voices and to hear their peculiar calmness, clearness. The weight of her child ached at her arm but she did not move.

"Sometimes, when I think of the world, I wonder whether I would be capable of living in it now. A noble lady may have eighty servants, and she cannot speak to one more than to another, under pain of exciting jealousy. The soul finds itself utterly confused, told on the one hand that, to guarantee itself from surrounding dangers, it must raise its thoughts continually towards God, and on the other, that it should not be found wanting in any of the civilities. I never satisfied. However much I studied, I always made some slip that society does not regard lightly. If only politeness could be learned once for always, patience. But even the heading of a letter demands special in-

struction, and whether the paper should be turned from one side or another. . . . Whatever is it leading to? I have seen it change so often that, although I am scarcely fifty, I don't know where I am. What will become of those to be born, if God grants them long life?"

The one who had first spoken of human and divine love did not reply, and Gerónima felt the voice had turned to eyes gazing on her and on her child. She pitied it. She herself might have been such a voice, might have been such eyes. She shifted the boy a little on her arm. Human love was easier, they said, and the reward unreal. Her eyes must remain closed if the Carmelites were to keep their faces bare and to continue talking. Neither could see the other's life, or know.

Then with a crash the thick sky burst and silver rain unrolled. It struck, and recoiled. It lashed from side to side, hissed, and swung like the veil of a person running. The carriage pulled more slowly through the rutted road, and creaked more heavily. The driver whistled loudly and cracked his whip. Once the wagon stopped. The long lash struck a flank, and then the whole lurched forward. The horses were wading deeply through a stream, whose water washed the floor-boards and bubbled in. Still Gerónima did not raise her lids but held her baby closer, and prayed in unison with the nuns.

Suddenly a terrific lurch. A wheel had broken in a rut. Gerónima, hurled forward, caught herself and,

looking up, saw the high window swung low and filled with white plum blossoms, and before it the white-robed women with faces of mother-of-pearl. They had become so used to seeing her that their hands went very slowly to their veils, and after a moment the eldest of them said, "Perhaps we need not, sisters." Their hands dropped, left their veils up. Gerónima smiled.

Before the wheel was mended the rain had thinned and stopped, and by the time the carriage started they were talking smoothly to each other through the cooled, cleared atmosphere, and yet each knew that the other held back in her speech, and each knew that the other denied what she heard. The nuns were too shy to speak of their joy in the love of Christ, and afraid that she might not understand if they should tell the glory of their nights of jubilee, when they danced and sang, and played their flutes, and beat their tambourines.

Gerónima spoke gently, tenderly, to protect the others lest they might understand too well the joy she felt returning, for she did not want to leave envy in the hearts of these white shadows, particularly in the one whose friend within the convent she might easily have been. But she could not keep herself from saying that her husband had true visions of the saints, since he painted them more beautifully than anyone could dream. When they did not answer, she tried to describe his painting, was dissatisfied with what she said, knew that she talked too much, but could not stop.

She said the movement of the hands was like the flight of the bird of God.

She was glad they were near Toledo. She did not wish to say all this into the still, white faces. It was not so much in her words as in her eyes, and in the words of the eldest sister speaking of people who lean too much on things of this world and who jerked her veil down sharply. The youngest had let her own veil drop.

But they were passing the fort of San-Servando outside of Toledo. They were passing the place of execution of heretics, they were driving up the long, steep road towards the gold earthen gate, (with Gerónima still talking, the nuns with her faces hid) under the Moorish arch, beyond. They stopped at the convent to let the Carmelites descend.

Then Gerónima's joy resounded through the empty coach. She hardly noticed that Jorge Manuel was awake. The nurse was busily gathering their parcels, but she did not see the servant, nor hear her grumble when the jerking wagon flipped the bundles from her arms. Each wheel-turn brought her nearer Greco. Crack of whip and clop of hoofs. It no longer was her child she pressed against her, sinking her lips into his russet curls, but the embodiment of almost three years' longing, and her expectation, and her frantic joy.

Greco had gone to watch above the bridge of Alcántara to see the carriage come, but, as they took a different road, he missed her.

She ran through the empty garden into the empty house, calling: "Domenicos! Domenicos!"

The maid followed, arms heaped with packages, and Jorge Manuel racing by her side.

From somewhere in the garden called: "Señora! Ah, señora!" Juan Preboste tore after her into the house that was sweet with orange blossoms and memory.

Juan had told her, in a breathless scramble of gestures and of words, blubbered through the thick accent of the mountaineer, that he would go to find his master, and had disappeared, leaving the house echoing with his assertions that his master was all wisdom and his master was a god.

Then Gerónima wandered through the place, with the child trailing after her. It all seemed strange, and she wondered whether she had forgotten, or if things were different. Perhaps it was only the absence of El Greco. But there were rooms he had not had before. Then the walnut bed and crimson canopy were new. Jorge Manuel climbed the stone bench to lean against the window in the room over the Tagus, and long after she had gone beyond, kept calling in monosyllables to come, see the birds at play above the round green of trees by the gold river's edge.

Puzzling sudden spots of luxury did not bring El Greco to Gerónima's mind. Carved desk with

leather lining. Books in three languages. She turned pages of decorative Greek, was teased by the Italian that she could almost understand. There was hardly any Spanish. Only one romance of knights-errant and chivalry. Most were of philosophy and of the lives of saints. She thought that if her parents had had only such books in their house, instead of so much useless fiction, she would not now have to be pretending marriage. She crossed herself for disrespect. It had been all right for her mother, who was a holy woman, to read those flippant works for rest and relaxation after her duties were done; but to give them to the children, and to let them read in hiding (because their father never would approve), to let them see the example of her little fault, was at least unwise, for Gerónima had read them with a different mind. She had hurried through her tasks to find more time to read, until her brain was senseless and all she needed for her happiness was another book. They had made her dream of great adventures, made her sigh like a heroine, and almost faint. Then they had led her to Domenicos. Blessed books! But he read tomes of architecture. In one was a loose sheet with the first sketch of the high altar El Greco had designed for San Domingo el Antíguo. Now that altar held the "Assumption" he had been painting when she stayed.

She ran her hands along the bindings of the books. They were all things she could not understand, and she whispered: "I am ignorant. He will instruct me." Her hands trembled with her love for him, and her

joy in her humility. "Domenicos, where are you? Why do you leave me in this empty house?" From room to room she asked the walls, "Where is my belovéd?"

The next door opened on the studio with its work-bench and work-table, its stones for grinding colours, its pots of paint and vials of varnish, drawings, clay models, and the pictures. Their colour made the atmosphere. Greco, that was he. Take away all else, destroy all memory, but in the presence of those pictures, Greco would return. She walked about the broad room slowly, then walked faster, touching every canvas with her hand, like Saint Augustine, like great Teresa, like the Spouse in the Canticles seeking the Creator in the created, singing: "Pictures, pictures, where is your maker? Tell me about him, all that he is. Pictures. The portraits. Who are his friends? Dr. Roderigo de la Fuente. How many times he made me think of death with his ring as big as a tombstone on the finger that pressed my pulse! Pompeyo de Leoni, the king's sculptor at work on his bust of the king. And the lord of the house of Lieva. You have been with him while I was away." She spoke the other names as she looked from face to face past the portraits in the long room, down to where the saints were hung—St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist, St. Stephen, St. Francis, and St. Francis again. How often he had painted him! When she used to ask him why, he answered everybody had his favourite saint. Then, after a while, he would remind her of the beauty

of the prayer in which St. Francis asked two things: that, so far as it is possible for any human creature, he might know the suffering of Christ, and know Christ's love of man. He was answered with the miracle of the stigmatization. Then, El Greco had hushed some never-spoken fear, and later, "I feel he is my brother." He stopped, and looked at his own hands, shuddered and then added, "The birds, he told the birds to sing. . . ."

"Why, yes," Gerónima laughed. "El Greco's hands can sing, and when he paints hands, they fly like birds; besides, there need not be a reason. It is enough that no one else can paint St. Francis as my Greco can."

The last that he had done was plastic and serene beside the Byzantine angles of the one he had brought from Italy. This was softer, fuller, with the realization of his standing as a man who is the father of a son, one who is assured that his name will not end.

"Ah, picture, tell me what his joy was when he learned of that! Tell me what his words were! Tell me of him! Pictures, pictures, bring back your maker. Set him before me where I can see him as though he were sleeping and did not know that I was watching him rest!"

The large compositions, ready to be set in the side altars of San Domingo el Antíguo, showed her the suave beauty of the face of one who dreams that life is opening like the Promised Land, with full scope for his creation and full praise of it. The resurrected Christ rose with His white banner, calm and high above

the wonderment of the awakened soldiers of the earth. In the "Adoration," one could hardly tell if the light spread from the Saviour in the manger or fell from the angels that grouped in brightness that almost eclipsed the crescent moon.

"Pictures, tell me of his happiness."

She had about her all the canvases for San Domingo el Antíguo, or the copies he had made in miniature before he let them go to fill the one church which would contain the entire expression of the gentle portion of El Greco's life. Looking at these paintings, she remembered that Greco said, "*It seems as though the saints are here on earth.*" Or maybe she had said it. She laughed in happiness to have confused the speaker of those words.

Then before the replica of the cathedral's "Despoliation" her laughter changed to memory of his voice, "*But not in the high places of the Church.*"

The mass of brutal men about Him, forcing the inevitable way towards Calvary, and the suffering that was expressed in lines of light and shadow, brought tears to her own eyes. She wished they might be tears of blood. She did not touch that canvas. She would as soon have dared to touch the wounds of the Christ. On seeing her own face as Mary, the sister of Martha, she cried out for her unworthiness, "God give me greater strength, or else restrain my joy!"

For the picture had brought before her its creator, all the greatness which he was and she could not contain, and yet he had placed her by the Saviour, and had

risked imprisonment to keep her portrait there. She could hardly stand before the canvas. She could not move her hands or feet; only her open lips repeated words of ecstasy.

"Pictures, pictures, where is your maker?"

El Greco, in the doorway, answered, "Beautiful!"

The army moved easily through Portugal, for bankrupt Spain still seemed the richest and most powerful of nations to the outside world. The Portuguese nobles were bought or exiled, and the terrified, unorganized people offered no resistance to the forces that were led by the veteran Duke of Alba, whom Emperor Charles the Fifth had recognized as his most distinguished soldier when Philip was sixteen—Alba, ambitious, sanctimonious, hypocritical then, and since then famed for the unflinching cruelty that crushed Flanders.

But the king's journey was another thing. Raised from childhood to trust no man, he had been forced to leave his government to Granvelle, an old statesman, also from his father's reign, but out of his control, and that at a time when Elizabeth of England and Catherine de' Medici in France were drawing together against him, and his life-long struggle with the papacy to hold himself supreme in the Church of Spain had reached a stage which, as he wrote to his minister, was exhausting even his boundless patience. The pope had sent a nuncio who countermanded every order of

the king and of the Spanish clergy. Constantly worried, suffering from gout, and unaccustomed to long, hard voyages, Philip fell desperately ill. Spain grieved and said masses. His devoted queen prayed endlessly that so valuable a life be saved, and that she might replace him in the womb of death. Her prayer was answered and the masses swung to requiems and weeping for Anne, the fourth wife of Philip, model of all virtues; and before the bells had stopped their tolling, two of her three children died, leaving only the weak infant Philip, Prince of Asturias, as heir to the realm.

Philip's court moved on in mourning; the king invisible, cowered in his coach with all the curtains drawn, and when he joined his army to receive the allegiance of Portugal, Alba was astonished to find his lord white-haired.

As inevitable as the march of Spain, was Greco's painting of San Mauricio and the Theban legion.

Gerónima asked, "But where is the miracle?"

"On the tongue of man."

El Greco told her it was less miraculous to him that a regiment should be decapitated, and less miraculous that the leader should take each severed head gently in his hands before he gave his own, than that he should have been able to persuade them by simple speaking to accept this martyrdom rather than deny their faith in God. So he had placed the slaughter in the distance, and the people talking in the foreground,

while angels on a cloud made music, and angels hovered with the martyrs' palms.

Still Gerónima was not convinced. She wanted to be moved to ecstasy. "It is the very meaning of the word. Miracle, to make men wonder."

"You admire Titian, don't you?" Greco asked. "Titian's teaching is to make a painting look like nature, or what men who see his canvases call nature, which is quite a different thing."

Gerónima tried to let the matter drop with a humble word about her ignorance. She liked to call herself an ant, a worm, and say that Greco was all-knowing. But she was not convinced of the miracle.

Sometimes when El Greco played with their child, he asked: "Will Jorge Manuel be page to the king? Or will he be a painter?" Then he tried to make the soft, round fingers draw.

Gerónima laughed. "He is such an infant!"

She wanted to persuade herself that she objected to El Greco's teaching him now, only because it made Jorge nervous. It was not because the day she had asked the pictures for their maker, he had asked to see the child too soon.

She said, "The sky is something of a miracle."

El Greco was disturbed. When he stood before over a hundred square feet of one stretched canvas, he did not want to think of her questioning the miracle. He wanted to forget the fear left in him by his quarrel with the Cathedral; he wanted to forget that he had not been paid even the pittance that the court allowed

him, and he wanted this picture to satisfy. When he was painting, suddenly her doubt would return and overwhelm him. Gerónima was Spanish. He was not. Then his hands would tire of the brush. He could only throw his vigour into colour when he felt exultant and alone; still, while he had worked out and drawn the perfect balance of his plan, he had considered the desires of the king of Spain. It was the only time he ever thought of the taste of his audience, but he was ambitious, and his whole future required that this canvas must succeed. He did not know Philip, but he knew that Titian had been the favourite painter for the royal house. El Mudo had been called the Spanish Titian, and Greco wanted to replace El Mudo in the endless work for the Escorial. If the thought of Titian came over him while he painted, he stamped his foot and tried to drive it back. He said: "Titian is dead. I am a greater painter than he ever was"; but he could not protect himself from his dreams at night. He restrained his nervous, mystic lines and his love of dramatization, half-unconsciously subordinating them to Titianesque realism, and while his painting had small resemblance to Titian's work, he was haunted by his fear and his desire.

"I can be sure that it is not Venetian colour. They used reds and golds. Spain is blue and silver-grey, cactus and dried olive trees on a granite hill, tinted by a perfect sky, and men attenuated and ascetic. This is Spain, and she will see herself portrayed here for the first time. All the art she has was done by Italians,

or people with Italian training and not courage or sense enough to go beyond. I have painted her soul with her own ground soil. You see?"

He pointed along the edge of his canvas to the daubs of earth colour where he had cleaned his brush.

This was said in confidence to a friend, who was amused at the thought of a Greek trying to portray the soul of Spain, and succeeding in doing it. One evening, in a pleasure-garden, under the sad-gay spell of staccato music in a minor key, watching the slow, undulating movement of the dancers' arms and the rapid motion of their feet, wishing to express it, and not finding words, he spoke of Greco's speech and painting. That may have been where the rumour started which slowly swelled into a positive, contemporaneous report that El Greco was driving himself insane in trying to paint differently from Titian.

The Spaniards painted soft, and sugar-sweet. El Greco's painting had the fury of an icon brought to life, and led through the rich vanity of Venice to an arid land that recalled its native place. White rocks, sharp shadows, sudden flowers, light like flame, high-flying birds, and the secluded peaceful beauty of Gerónima. Yet, she could not see the miracle, and she was Spanish.

He realized sharply that he was Greek when he was called before the Inquisition as interpreter in the trial of his compatriot, Rizo Carcindal, accused of Moorish practices. In spite of his pledge of secrecy, he told

Gerónima how revolting it was to him to see a man harassed to tell why he kept his body clean.

Gerónima answered: "Don't you understand, Domenicos, aside from the fact that so much washing is a sign of being Jew or Moor, of which he was acquitted, too much care for the whiteness of the hands, and the lascivious practices of warm baths, with all their vanities and perfumes, not only take the time which could be used for better things, but lead others to actions displeasing to the Lord?"

He overlooked her puritanism, for she was pale under her heavy hair, and Greco knew that she had wept and reproved herself to flagellation since she had learned that the saintly Mother Teresa of Jesus was dead.

The canvas of San Mauricio, thirteen and a half feet high and nine feet broad, was ready when the widowed king returned from Portugal. First Philip found himself forced to expel the papal nuncio. Then the pope collapsed and recognized the king supreme in the Spanish Church. The Admiral Santa Cruz was insisting that this was the time to strike England suddenly by surprise. Philip tried to persuade him, before he had to command, that the expedition wait until Spain was ready to make the blow decisive. The king had been patient thirty years, and he could wait a little longer. He reviewed in detail the mismanagement of his realm during his absence, remedied where he could. Then he was ready to see the picture and have it placed over a high altar in the Escorial.

VII. The Great (1584-1609)

Early in the year of 1584 El Greco accompanied his great canvas to the Escorial. Doña Gerónima saw him hover over it, continually rearrange the straps that held it, and ride off, worried over the joggling of the cart. She smiled indulgently and turned away, thinking what a fussy mother animal he was. Then she raised her head and dreamed the scene of the Escorial: the arrival of the king's closed coach, of Greco seeing the seldom-seen majesty. Even if the court was like a monastery, life would be proud and pleasant soon.

After April, watching his return, she thought there could be no finer horsemanship in Spain. His steaming mount breathed blood into her face. Domenicos seemed taller; arrogant lids half-drooped over darkened eyes. His russet beard and hair were faultlessly arranged. His linen was the finest. His ruff was lace, and his face was the smoothed yellow ivory of a saint's crucifix.

All Toledo saw that he was rich. Sweetmeats came to him from Genoa, from Venice goblets, and local merchants speculated about the rare drinks that they would hold. One spoke of the quantities of perfumed lozenges he bought; another of the spices and the cherries, and of porters always seen carrying snow and

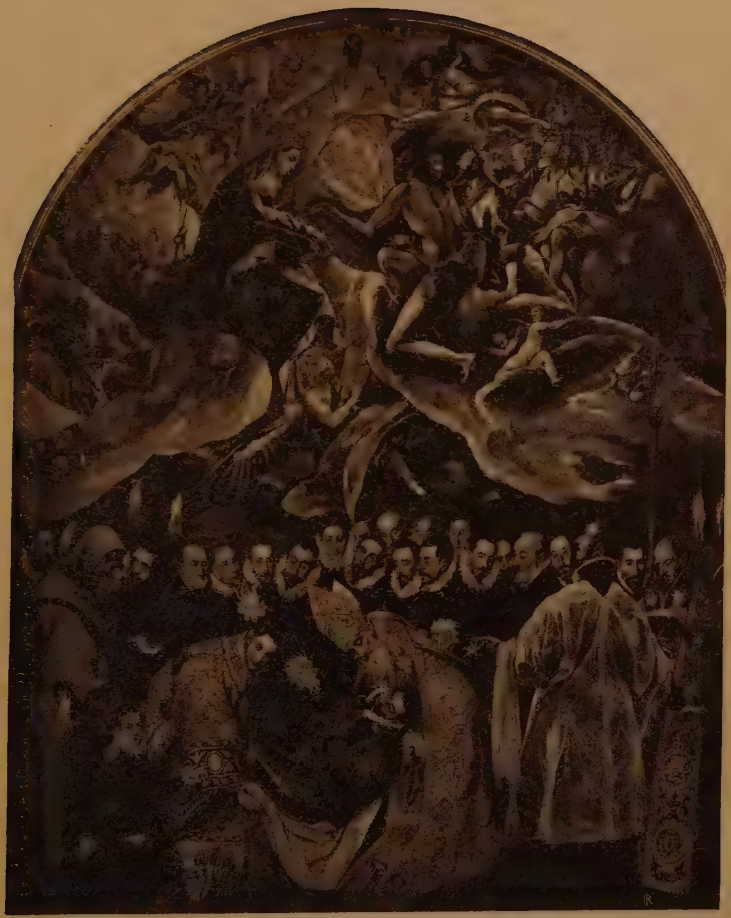
salt into his house for freezing beverages. There were wines from distant countries and, strangest of all, hired musicians were heard playing at meal times, so that it was whispered he must be the greatest artist of the realm, that he could afford thus to partake of all delights at once.

Those who came to his entertainments were envious and scandalized. There were no padlocks on the dishes that brought the most expensive food. Even El Greco did not know how hard Juan Preboste and María Gómez were put to it in the kitchen to see that their master was not pauperized by the servants' gluttony. The musicians played Venetian music. Only El Greco knew how the rhythm of the Spanish hands, and the sudden voices raised like screams, and the slow undercurrent Spanish strain drawing backwards endlessly made it weird and melancholy. It moved him insupportably. He loved it, and he hated it, and threw himself from it into such talk, so brilliant and so cynical, that his hearers agreed quickly in order that no one should guess they would go mad if they should try to follow him.

One thing, however, every man did understand. This luxury was the result of the canvas "San Mauricio," bought by the king. The Cathedral was proud of its "Despoliation." The other churches wondered whether El Greco would work for Toledo again. Every word and every gesture, every angle of his well-poised form, his face—even to its least expressive feature—the contraction and the quivering of his long,

thin nostrils, spoke his confidence and arrogance, yet with a blend of something weird, mysterious, maybe tortured, maybe mad.

Therefore, when the clergy of the Church of San Tomé won their long suit against the town of Orgaz, to be paid the tribute left them by the church's founder, who was that city's lord, they went to the Cardinal Archbishop Don Gaspar de Quiroga, holiest of men, to know whether they might spend some of the money for an imposing picture to celebrate and preserve the memory of the miracle which took place at the burial of the count, when two saints came down from heaven and with their own hands took his body from the bearers and laid it in the tomb. The cardinal's home was a place of prayer, with masses said all day and all night. He resented the time taken by his duties to the Church from his personal service of God. He lived on dried bread and melted snow, gulped down at the irregular hours when his body would have fainted for need of food. But in his study was a portrait of his gentle, contemplative face, which Greco had painted with such miraculous speed that he had lost no time from his devotions. He told the priests that while the manner in which El Greco lived, clinging to the goods of the world, was dangerous, of course, still, he was not yet forty, not yet at the age where many of the saints had turned from sin and vanity to eternal glory. God grant him long life, repentance, and due care for his soul, amen, and the only question was whether he would be willing to undertake this work.



The Burial of the Count Orgaz
El Greco, 1586

El Greco demanded twelve hundred ducats of the priests, although the city had been scandalized when he had asked the Cathedral nine, and he had been paid only one-third of that, and grudgingly. But, since then, he had been favoured by the king, and approved by Quiroga, so the order was given.

Greco started the canvas, then he stopped. There had been hesitancy and complaint about his price, and the order had not been put in legal form. He wanted money, money in unending quantities, money to lay rich things at Gerónima's feet, laces and brocades, heavy golden jewellery, set with deep rich-coloured stones. She had been pale and dull recently. He wanted to make her glow. He wanted money to raise his child delicately, to surround him always with beautiful things, so that he might grow up feeling himself part of a triumphant nation, to paint with his father's training and his father's power, but without the bitterness of belonging to a defeated race—a Greco free from the heritage of poverty and memory of Crete. He wanted money for himself to make himself a force, feared and respected where he was not loved, to make himself triumphant in this foreign land. Money was the only means he had to prove continually to himself that he was conqueror. Now these sly priests were treating him as an ignorant foreigner again. He would have their ducats, but he could not paint while he was thinking of it. He engaged the clever lawyer, Melchor Ruiz de Bustos, to watch his interests and handle his suits. Ruiz de Bustos had the contract put in legal

form accepting the amount, and the Church only dared to stipulate that, since El Greco had received the order two years before, and during that time had neglected their commission to paint many other canvases, and sculpture many things, including two magnificent marble tombs with figures and pilasters, their picture should be finished by Christmas.

This was the triumphant period of El Greco's life that would march on inexorably twenty years. The canvas was larger than that stretched for the king. It told the story as it must have been when the grandees stood behind the body of the count with their torches blazing under a dark sky, and they did not see the strait cut through the clouds. They did not see the angel swing in the narrow channel with draperies belling back from the descent. Their wonderment at recognizing the dress and features of the saints who laid the body in the tomb, had kept their faces turned from the hierarchy of heaven, with immortals grouped in every crevice of the clouds.

El Greco painted careful portraits of hidalgos in the funeral group, placed himself among them, and painted Jorge Manuel as an elegant page. He only let himself go free in painting on St. Stephen's brocade robe a miniature of that saint's martyrdom, which stands as a prophecy of his later work.

Sometimes while he studied his canvas, Gerónima walked across the studio to lean against his shoulder. She saw the figures of the earth quite as she saw men, or at least as she saw men after looking at the painting;

then she reminded him as gently as seemed possible, "They want the miracle of the burial, and this is more realistic than the San Mauricio."

"They don't know what they want," he answered.

She was silent. If she did not agree, he would write his thoughts in his journal instead of telling them to her. Besides, it did not matter what she said. Besides, other things were so much more important to her now than paint.

Doña Gerónima posed for the Virgin Mother. She watched him paint their child, saw him place on the white lace handkerchief of the page the date which marked his birth, as though Greco's complete manhood had begun with Jorge rather than with her. Evenings when El Greco went out with his friends, or when they came to him, often foreigners who spoke Greek, and they laughed and grew excited over words she could not understand, she stood over the boy's bed and told herself his beauty should only make her glad; that if he was to be the companion of his father, she should rejoice. What more could a woman ask than to be called "madonna"? She held her candle high to watch the child, all satiny in sleep. Then she went to her room and sat looking into the brazier until her eyes were coals. The musicians were playing in the regal hall. She heard loud voices. They were discussing things she knew her female mind could never comprehend even when they spoke in Spanish. His life was going high, and beyond her power to share. She sighed and

lay down on the broad bed, and her body beat with the longing Canticle:

I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock.

I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

She sighed again. Her eyes were tears. Her throat was choking, and her mind so full of thousands of unutterable thoughts that she could only lie still on the bed and let them try to wring a sound from her.

Music tinkled. Music moaned. Woman then must be mysterious to man, and man be unattainable to her. The sleeping child was growing man. She was a different species. God above, is woman nothing but the mother thing? He thought he gave her joy when he called her madonna.

"Oh," she warned herself, "contain your love. Do not be like a little child that cries out and beats its fists upon the wall."

Next morning she posed again for the Madonna. El Greco realized that her face was changing. It offered greater purity of line, less restlessness, as though it had grown to think and realize as well as to feel, and as though her realization had come through pain. She was more lovely this minute than ever when she glowed.

"You are so beautiful," El Greco said.

"What is the difference?"

"Quite a lot."

Then he lost all breath and thought in his passionate painting of the sky transfigured into heaven, massed saints and seraphim and cherubim and minor angels, whose celestial music clouded about the serene Madonna.

When he was exhausted, she laid her arms around him and ran her fingers through his hair. He said, "You are so kind." He left the canvas of Orgaz while he painted her as merciful Saint Veronica.

He tried to teach his child to paint. He set him to copying his work, and noticed that his servant, Juan Preboste, was trying to copy, too. He also had an apprentice, Luys Tristan; but his whole thought of teaching was concentrated on his son.

He told Gerónima: "He shall carry on my painting as well as my name, and no one has ever understood painting as I do. Titian knew his colour; Michel Angelo his drawing; Tintoretto combined them, but the Italians were pagans. I learned all they could teach me, and add to that my first training in Crete, to know that painting is a sacred art. And yet it is not soft. Look at that sky. The miracle is there. The men, whose dream it is, are on the earth, and not miraculous. Only a very few can even see a miracle."

By Christmas the canvas was finished, but the brotherhood did not want to pay. They had heard a rumour that things had passed differently at the

Escorial from what they had imagined, and when they asked for the picture, they sent no money. To their surprise, El Greco set the canvas into place in time for Christmas mass. Incense, singing, and the picture joined in overwhelming beauty. The congregation marvelled at the life-like portraits of so many people that they knew. Those who lived in Toledo, and those who came from the outside, never tired of identifying the heads behind the count. Some were a little troubled about the sky, but they were reticent in criticizing a vision they had never had. The things of earth were so correctly done, they thought that he must also know that positive scene of heaven. Unending streams of people came, ceaselessly admiring, and giving alms, and yet they had no conception of the thing that they admired. The recognition of the portraits was a passing phase. Only one of the heads can be positively identified, but a generation which has no faith in an anthropomorphic heaven stands before that canvas in realization of the miracle; man and his dream separate, yet welded by the fact of one man's concretion, and that in a medium which defies definite ideas, a thing of cloth and pigment, little pots of paint, made into varying textures, bodies, forms, and the ideal of a race.

El Greco, who had created this, watched the admiring yokels come to gape before his canvas and enrich the church with offerings. Then he told the priests that it was time to pay.

In spite of the contract, an arbiter was called to set a more reasonable figure. The clergy whispered some-

thing of the rumour in his ear, but the arbiter marvelled at the picture and named the stipulated price. The church would not pay, but had it valued once again. This time the judgment was raised to sixteen hundred ducats. The infuriated Chapter knew what it knew, and not a single maravedi left its coffers until El Greco drew up an appeal to the pope; then the contract price was given him.

The day of the second judgment the "Invincible Armada" sailed—not under its original commander, Santa Cruz, who had died broken-hearted three months earlier, foreseeing the defeat which everyone in power foresaw, except the bigoted recluse king, who directed the manœuvres from the royal hermitage of the Escorial. England knew the whole plan. Only the year before, Drake had swung into the harbour of Cadiz, burned the ships and naval stores, and not one man had dared offer resistance. It was only because he did not know that the Armada lay helpless in the port of Lisbon without a single gun, that the ungainly fleet was spared. Then, after years of meditation and elaborate plans, all promptly transmitted to Queen Elizabeth by efficient spies, the great Armada put to sea with the timid Duke of Medina Sidonia forced into command, but howling back protesting messages to Philip, assuring him it was a doomed expedition, which he was too weak and inefficient to lead. But the duke was too

frightened and inefficient even to uphold the statement of his own inefficiency.

El Greco painted while the fleet was scattered by storms. El Greco painted while the cumbersome vessels tried to move up the English Channel and could not make their ports, while the land forces refused to join them, and the wind was driving them up the stream further than they wished to go, until they dropped anchor in order to stop. Then the light English fighting craft came out from their port, each man conscious of his personal allegiance to the Maiden Queen who had ridden among them in emblazoned armour, her gold head bare, and a page following with her white-plumed helmet in his hands. She, with bitter scorn in her heart against her unpersistent suitor Philip, and with perhaps a little fear of the strength of his Catholic God, had appealed to them, playing the whole force of her conscious beauty and her regal virginity before hired soldiers, as she had played it against every crown in Europe and—except for Philip II—always won.

Her fighting vessels darted through his galleons. The Spaniards had intended to grapple and fight, but the Englishmen would not close in. Although the Spaniards taunted, screaming, "cowards!" the English warships kept their distance, while their cannon chipped away the helpless Spanish hulks. Then, when the fire-boats blazed into them, the ungainly Armada could only raise anchor and become a lot of frightened hulls ramming each other in their haste to

get away. From the fleet of one hundred and thirty-one ships that had put forth from Spain, sixty-five returned, battered and blood-soaked, beset with famine, drought, and pestilence.

El Greco painted while Spain gave way under him. He seemed to write triumph into its defeat. With its breaking up of power came his breaking of round forms that released the spirit in his painting. Gerónima often saw him standing at the window over the river, with his hands held to the rays of sunset. He did not seem to hear her if she spoke, but later he would paint St. Francis, rich in poverty, ecstatic, with his palms stretched to receive their stigmata, or he might write in his journal of light cleaving forms, and of cleft forms yielding light.

He often talked to his son of intricate and mystical philosophies. No books were closed to him, for the Inquisition did not lay its hands on works in Greek. He taught the boy the rules of architecture, taught him all he could of sculpture and of paint, and told himself it was enough that he became efficient. Experience and adult growth would put the spirit in the work. Wherever Greco went, he took the lad, so that Jorge Manuel learned to speak with dignity and poise to intellectuals, nobles, and the highest officers of the Church. He became an elegant young man, a little quiet, for he always tried to understand the strange deference with which men spoke to his father, cold, all except the rich young Dr. Gregorio de Angulo, who almost courted him. When Angulo showed Greco his

poetry, and the praise Cervantes and Lope de Vega had written of it, Greco smiled, but only called him friend.

More important were the days when the Inquisition hired a palace court, supplied the bulls and the refreshments, and nobles rode to mate them for sheer joy of giving battle and for pride of horsemanship. And more important still, warm summer nights after the Inquisition had ordered an elaborate staging to be built on the Plaza. Then closed coaches came, filled with players, actors, dancers, wardrobe-keepers, whose procession was led through crowded streets by a huge cardboard sea monster, ridden by the women of Babylon, followed by children crowned with flowers, swinging censers, singing hymns, then dancers with tambourines and castanets, then reeling, towering Moors and negroes that made the unsophisticated scream to the laughter of the ones who knew that they were only dummies. Then hush! all watchers bowed as the Church music brought a long parade of priests and important people, followed by elaborate floats with actors in their costumes, all leading up to the sacred drama played at night. A few veiled women sat in the windows around the Plaza, separate from the men. El Greco took his son. He continually told him: "Watch, watch the pure beauty of the thing. These long rhymed verses are ridiculous. It depends on the actors. I wish that you could know the acting that I used to see in Venice. It created life before your eyes."

Jorge Manuel watched his face, and tried to see as his father wished that he should see. But El Greco

was not scared, only amused, when the bruised, bedraggled Satan limped onto the scene. The actor had been stoned all day in the streets, and the druggist, recognizing him, had refused to sell him balms for his wounds. El Greco did not fall down on his knees with the rest of the audience, crying, "*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa,*" with the actor penitent. It was only when the dancer came out between the acts that Jorge Manuel saw his father become alert and heard him telling him to see the way the light and shadow rippled down her long, slim, undulating body under her immobile palms held high in the air to click and click the castanets, evenly, interminably, insupportably repeating and repeating, holding back while her eyes roamed through the audience, and her unmoving body danced. Then scream and sudden leap, she swung, snapping like a whip. Jorge Manuel could not imitate his father's face. He could not see only play of light and shadow. He wanted to be exactly like his father, but his young Spanish blood responded to the nasal "Yang, yang," responded to the men's growing roar, her scream, then went from hot to cold with "*Mea culpa, mea culpa.*"

El Greco saw his face and smiled. It was his age, and it showed spirit in the lad.

The boy went to Gerónima and questioned her about his feelings when he saw the women dance, questioned her, because he was afraid to show his weakness and his terror to his father. She looked into his pale, delicate face, and realized he had become man before she would

have thought it possible. There were things she was afraid to speak about, and she was as frightened of Domenicos as was the boy. This being, who stood in furious joy above her land's defeat, as though its death and misery were his justification, was not that wise, gentle youth who had mingled God and love. And yet she loved him. She had given him her body and her soul and only wished she knew how to give more. Nuns who say their mystic love is more difficult, nuns are fortunate. If they can be faithful, God will answer patient, loving prayer, and then no one can rob them of their happiness, for it depends only on themselves. Jorge Manuel was waiting by her side. What could she tell him, who was all mourning in her heart? She spoke to him of God and chastity.

El Greco painted for the altars of the chapel of San José, which the saintly Teresa had founded for nuns who astonished her with the extent of their "perfection." While he measured walls, he was conscious of white-sandalled clouds, enclosing women who moved through the garden as softly as white doves, and as unpretentiously, although each one felt the Saviour as her lover by her side. When they became accustomed to him, sometimes one, sometimes another, would drift near him, and the sheeted thing begin to speak in a transparent voice, telling of the founding of the monastery, when the blessèd Mother Teresa,

with Sister Isabella of San Domingo, and sister Isabella of San Pablo, slipped into their building at night, aided only by a strange young man mysteriously sent to them, and with borrowed ornaments, and a little communion bell, celebrated the first mass. Her voice was like the little bell when she said: "The mother had only two or three ducats as her entire wealth. With them she bought two pictures for the altar, two straw mattresses and a blanket; so it was simple to move in. She said there was not enough wood to cook a sardine, but God inspired a person to leave a fagot in this chapel, and it was well done, because they suffered from the cold at night. But they were happy in their poverty, and those who tell the story never cease to wonder at the treasures which God hides within the virtues."

Greco retouched the pictures when they were set in place, and the nuns kept telling him how beautiful they were, different words in different tones, but always spoken by faces hidden under identical drapery. Then gradually the voice became more often the same, saying how much it helped in prayer and meditation to be able to gaze upon the features of the saints and see the portrait of Our Lord's humanity; that Mother Teresa was truly inspired when she accepted the money from Alfonso Ramírez to build the monastery, although it took away the gift of poverty, and many people blamed her for treating with a merchant in these things, rather than waiting for a noble, or at least a gentleman; but Our Lord revealed to her the futility of worldly titles and vast domains. "Besides,

Ramírez is from one of the best merchant families, and he gave us this fine building, one of the most expensive in Toledo. It cost twelve thousand ducats. And it was somewhat of a miracle that he sent us you."

She crossed herself and ran off.

Later the same voice returned: "I mean, the hands you paint are as Mother Teresa described angels' hands, and the light is as she said was light of heaven, and you could not have known. Oh, Greco, if you would only think of your own soul, and less, as they tell me you do, of the world's goods! How passing those things are beside the favour God has granted you with such sight!"

Doña Gerónima watched El Greco's growing calm and gentleness. In praise of his return, she sang out praise of God. She went continually to mass at San José, never without offerings, flowers, and prayers of gratitude. She saw the quiet, white-draped nuns, listened to their voices, and wondered which one might be the young sister who had watched her, but so seldom had spoken, in the cart the day she had returned with Jorge Manuel. She was so grateful in her transparent joy, that she wanted to sing out among these silent nuns, and to speak into their faces, particularly if she could find that one.

When the hour of meditation came, a white sister knelt in her oratory, reaching towards her Lord, falling short, reaching again, but finding her heart a stone too heavy for her will to raise, until desolation weighed down even on her will and the holy image in her hand

was meaningless. She beat her head against the paving of the floor and cried out: "Have I sinned? Have I been unfaithful to my Sacred Spouse? I, who believed that I no longer held to any creature of this earth, have I chained down my heart in trying to save him?"

She beat her hands and head until she lost consciousness of pain, and only knew the steady rhythmic beat, and that despondency pressed down like a storm-cloud, and the ground seemed to give way. She smelled sulphur and was terrified to have so gravely sinned that devils dare attack her while she held the crucifix. Then a great light flooded the dark oratory, and she saw Christ. She did not doubt her vision, for it was as Greco had portrayed Him. Joy touched her heart and the stone broke, yielding floods of grateful tears. She saw no more, but heard the words, "My daughter, you do well."

She did not tell her experience, but spent her nights in secret prayer, asking for greater wisdom to offer him, and her little, formless figure with its hidden face received El Greco's sorrow when Herrara died.

Spain scorched and starved with the outrageous tax know as "the millions" which weighed on every article of food. King Philip II, rotting with disease, in too great agony to have his ulcers cleaned, was carried on a litter to the Escorial. He called his son to his bedside to witness the edifying end of the kingdoms of the

earth, and gave him as his most precious heritage two scourges—that used by his father, and that used by himself—and the scourge of the Emperor Charles was more bloody than his own. Philip III's weak head received the crown, and when his father's minister brought state papers to him with many documents for deep consideration, he yawned and said to leave them on the table—the Marquis of Denia would see to them. Then he sat up alertly and added, "We must make the marquis duke. He shall be Duke of Lerma. And we must attend to that marriage with Austria which my father arranged for me. First thing, I need money. There is not enough in the treasury to pay the servants and buy food."

The groaning legislature voted the amount that Philip III asked, and the elaborate court rolled through the ruined country to Valencia to meet Margarita of Austria, the new queen. Never, even in the emperor's reign, had there been so gorgeous a procession as their return. All Spain basked in the splendour of this truly Spanish sovereign, with Spanish education, Spanish personality, languid, pleasure-loving, superstitious, generous. The bribed legislature voted extraordinary funds as pin money for the royal pair who rode back across Aragon, granting full amnesty throughout the province which had been in rebellion the year before, scattering more knighthoods and grandeeships than Philip II had given in ten years. The grateful Aragonese showered them with money and with love, then asked that the Inquisition be

abolished, and Philip promised to consider it. There were processions, cane tournaments, bull-fights, everywhere they passed. The nobles curbed their snorting horses and drove their swords into the bulls with more joy, skill, and fury than ever before, as the mated animal that tottered on its hoofs and crashed personified the institution which they hoped to end. The royal pageant moved towards Toledo in a mounting climax of festivities. Then the ancient capital, the walled Visigothic city, planned to offer an *auto-de-fe*, the act of faith, the judgment scene of the Inquisition, as a joyous and timely exhibition in honour of that degenerate king who, instead of scourging the impudent Aragonese for their impertinent request, had allowed them to believe that the Holy Office might abate.

El Greco was summoned to paint the portrait of the Inquisitor-General Don Fernando Niño de Guevara. He had little time to sit. The royalty was due in March, and the heretical material had been exhausted by the stupidity of Don Pedro de Portacarrero—peace to his soul—who, as inquisitor-general, had allowed Toledo to celebrate a judgment scene the year before, after Philip III had been crowned. El Greco saw continual messengers race to Córdoba, Granada, Cuenca, Llerena, Valladolid, and Seville, with orders that their prisoners be sent to swell the exhibition. The Granada tribunal, only, held a man capable of being *relaxed*, or given over to the secular arm to be burned, a fact of which the Holy Office washed its Pilate hands.

Although he was a pertinacious Huguenot, Granada insisted on trying to lead him from his heresies. But they had tried in vain for years, and he was needed for the entertainment.

The only other two who might have burned, had died in prison after "exhaustive questioning," and it would not be sufficiently impressive to cremate their effigies without a single living victim for the flames. While El Greco painted him, Guevara's exasperated hands gripped the arms of his chair in fury at his short-sighted predecessor, and at Granada's stubbornness. El Greco saw secretaries rush in to announce that racked and crippled prisoners had arrived. The total might be brought to over forty, but they needed at least one burning for this spectacle which, as nearly as possible, set the Last Judgment before Spanish eyes. Finally the Suprema commanded Granada to send Jacques Pinzon, the Huguenot.

There was not time properly to conclude his trial and confirm the sentence condemning him; so, the Granada tribunal wrote, his papers would be made out in blank and sent later for the inquisitors in Toledo to sign. That was that much settled, but Niño de Guevara was restless as he sat, and Greco always saw his congealing eyes swing against the sides of his black-rimmed spectacles, saw the sudden shirring of his eyebrows, and the broad, straight, relentless mouth speak quickly in answer to a secretary's report on the building of the staging in the central plaza: the two pulpits from which the sentences would be read; a

The Inquisitor-General D. Fernando Niño de Guevara
El Greco, 1600

bench from which the penitents would hear their penalties; the rail in case of fainting; and, under the tribunal, the refreshment-room. Greco, while he painted on, half-heard the list of things provided: ninety-five pounds of Genoese sweetmeats costing one thousand and eight reales; thirty-two Talavera dishes rented for eighteen reales, twenty-eight maravedis; four baskets, six trays, four padlocks for the baskets, thirty-two glasses, for thirty-three reales thirty; four double-urinals with covers; thirty pounds of ordinary sweetmeats and biscuits for attendants; porters to carry the sweetmeats to the houses of the officials and to the balconies around the plaza; ten gallons of lemonade; ten pounds of loaf sugar; ten gallons of cinnamon water; fifteen pounds of sugar; half-pound of cinnamon; charcoal to boil it; two hundred and fifty pounds of snow for freezing beverages; twenty-five pounds of snow to keep the jars from melting; rent of fourteen jars with ice-pails; three pecks of salt for freezing; porters, labourers, ornamenting and furnishing the staging, three hundred reales, making a total of two thousand and sixty-seven reales, seven maravedis. Wood had been ordered. Wood was growing scarce. Still the papers for that heretic had not come. Send riders out to investigate. The portrait was unending, and there was no time to sit, but it would be a poor thing to receive royalty in a palace without a single picture of the inquisitor-general.

While Greco painted, the lines of his face grew thin. He painted the impatient hands with their four pre-

cious rings. He painted the gorgeous robe with its beautiful lace, delicately feminine and grotesque beneath the fanatical stony face of the harassed inquisitor.

To reach the room in which Guevara chose to sit, El Greco had to pass through many others filled with holy people who worked late into the night to finish the accessories to be worn by penitents, mitres and *sanbenitos*, penitential cloaks painted with the insignia of their sentences—flames and devils for the Huguenot. There were the halter for him and the halters for those to be scourged, two effigies, half human size, with their mitres and *sanbenitos*, painted on one side with flames, and on the other with the names of the dead and the names of their heresies, the black boxes to hold their bones, and the poles on which they were to be carried to the pyre. Then the green cross for the Huguenot to bear, and the yellow wax candles for the penitents, and bundles of osiers for the reconciliation ceremonies. Women draped the coffer to contain the sentences with crimson velvet and gold fringe, and set its gilt key into its gilt lock. Men built the great green cross to be carried by the Dominican prior. There was no end of things to do, and the inquisitor-general, Niño de Guevara, had to sit practically motionless while Greco painted him. Never had the artist taken such a time. Still, it was natural he should be nervous before such a dignitary, and it was the most elaborate portrait Greco ever made, truly a magnificent and speaking thing.

It looked as though a snort pulled the nose in

sharply at its base. It looked as though his eyes were made of rocks, and his mouth was a trail of fire blazed through his grizzled beard. Free brush-strokes made the velvet ripple and showed all the crisp lushness of the magnificent robes. At last the portrait was finished. Pinzon's papers had arrived. Guevara signed them, looked upon the portrait, and was pleased. He offered the artist, as gift and command, a seat among the officials of the Inquisition to witness the great scene.

Mounted officers, with drums and clarions and the holy standard, clattered through the town. The bellman rang his bell, and the town-crier called out:

Know all dwellers in this city that the Holy Office of the Inquisition, for the glory and honour of God and the exaltation of our Holy Catholic Faith, will celebrate a public auto-de-fe on the Plaza Zocodover, on Sunday the sixth day of March, of the year one thousand and six hundred.

The evening before the *auto-de-fe,* El Greco watched the young king and young queen witness the Procession of the Green Cross marching through Toledo's narrow streets. The standard of crimson damask, richly embroidered with the royal arms, and with the green cross rising from the crown, led the procession from its staff of gold. The white cross followed with a long train of religious Orders, and the cross of the Cathedral with its clergy, then the green cross, borne by the Dominican prior, followed by the clergy and priests with torches, chanting the

"Miserere." The green cross was planted above the altar in the plaza and guarded by Dominicans all night. The white cross was guarded on the pyre by a special body of soldiers, the Zarza, and soldiers guarded the Inquisition until daybreak, when they roused the officials by beat of drum to celebrate mass, take the prisoners from their cells, deck them in their mitres and penitential coats, and range them for the festival: the soldiers of the Zarza first, then the cross of the parish church shrouded in black, with an acolyte to toll a bell; after him the penitents (with two guards for each one, and porters to carry those too crippled to walk), lined up in the order of their crimes: impostors, impersonators of officers of the Inquisition, blasphemers, bigamists, Judaizers, Protestants who had abjured, the effigies with their chests of bones, and the man who was to be *relaxed.* Reining their impatient horses, the mounted officials in pairs, the standards of the Inquisition, then the inquisitors. "Attention!" They marched through the thickly-crowded streets to the great square, to mount onto the staging, hear the sermon, hear the oath.

El Greco saw King Philip III, Queen Margarita, the Duke of Lerma, with the entire court, which had ridden through *fêtes* and carnivals that foretold a gladder reign, stand while the inquisitor-general announced:

Your Majesty swears and promises, by his faith and royal word, as a true and Catholic King, anointed

by the hand of God, to defend with all of his power the Catholic faith, held and believed by the holy Mother Church of Rome, and conserved and aided by her, and that he will pursue and prosecute heretics and apostates and that he will maintain and favour and give such aid as may be necessary to the Holy Office of the Inquisition and its Officers, in order that the heresies against our religion may be punished in conformity to the sacred canons, without any omission on the part of Your Majesty, or exception to favour any person, regardless of rank or quality.

The young King Philip answered, "Thus I swear and promise by my faith and royal word."

The forty-six sentences were read hurriedly, for it was nearly evening and the fires must be lit during the day. The soldiers of the Zarza discharged their arquebuses. Forty-three penitents were led back to the prison of the Inquisition. Pinzon was mounted on an ass and taken with the effigies to the pyre beyond the city walls.

From his seat in the tribunal, El Greco watched him go, tall, with a face less frightened than sorrowful. He did not seem to see the two priests by his side, exhausting their breath in a last effort to convert him. He did not seem to see the company of soldiers to protect him, nor even the mob that threw stones and sticks and spat at him. Almost everyone had followed, or had gone below to partake of refreshments. El Greco stayed. He saw the fire rise into the sunset and slash the sky with streaks of smoke and flame and lurid

light. He heard the distant crackle and the howls of the populace, saw rounds of smoke like heads, then bursts of flame and sweeps of darkness, and the memory of the proud, almost pitying face, and of his own weak confession at the very threat of torture, for fear that they would break his hands. He stood and felt sharp pain within his palms. He cried out, "Gentle God and Saviour, gentle saints!"

He rushed from the tribunal in terror lest he might confess into the iron face of Niño de Guevara. He wandered blindly through the swaying streets with pain biting at his hands and the fire behind him blazing. Burning embers fell. The sun had gone, but the tower of fire burned throughout the night.

At home, El Greco found Juan Preboste, wrapped in his yellow penitential cloak, rolling on the floor, heard him choking, sputtering: "I saw them throw the burning fagot on the wood. I looked into his face. I never witnessed anything so sad and terrible. We were afraid. Master, there was not the usual stench. He died in the odour of sanctity. My imaginings return on me. God loves kindness. God loves charity. The Inquisition is an evil thing. . . ."

El Greco strangled the words with his hands, while the nervous pain ate deeper at his palms, and the smoky air cut stinging through the lungs. All night the fire made a cracking column through the sky, made a snapping black and yellow background for the memory of that face. It was almost morning when they let the fire die, because the devil had allowed this heretic to

appear so in the semblance of a martyr that they dared not leave one shred of bone that might become a relic —nothing but ashes to be scattered in running streams.

Next morning, while El Greco stood before the three pictures which he had thought almost ready to deliver to the Colegio Santa Maria de Aragón in Madrid, he heard the penitents condemned to scourging pass. Astride on asses, stripped to the waist, their heads held high by iron "keep-friends," with halters around their necks, knotted one knot for each hundred lashes (one hundred minimum, two hundred estimated as all that life could bear), they were led through the streets while the multitude howled and stoned them. How differently the executioner's strong lash sounded on dumb flesh, from the symbolic tap with which priests touch penitents' shoulders in absolution! El Greco's study of his pictures—the "Baptism," "Resurrection," "Crucifixion"—was cut by sounds of screams and flagellation. How different this was from the dignified ecclesiastical processions he had seen in Rome, where, if there was scourging it was monks inflicting it upon themselves for release of ecstasy. Gentle Clovio had been such a monk, but these—these barbaric thuds on the rebellious flesh of half-nude men and women exposed to shame and agony, unable even to bend their heads—he thought: "this horror is not Rome, is not the pope, is not religion, not the Cath-

olic faith, but the Spanish Inquisition, held in defiance of the Mother Church, begun by Ferdinand and Isabella more than a century ago, and not for God, but for their own ambition to force unity on heterogeneous realms, artificially to weld one nation out of fragments. They used religion as their pawn. They held it slave, while generations of the so-called Catholic kings fought the pope with armies of hired heretics, sacked the Eternal City, despoiled the sacred shrines, expelled the papal legates, refused the papal bulls, and, in the midst of sacrilege, the Inquisition grew. Spanish kings drew back in horror, but too late, for fanaticism overbalanced them. And when fanatics themselves recoiled, there was the power the inquisitors had accumulated to overbalance them, until revolt against the Inquisition had become revolt against the realm, and then the king was forced to aid and give it strength in turn to defy the king again. Thus each power turned the wheel to build and perpetuate the terror of the Holy Office, which hardly represents even the religious faith of Spain, that mysticism which can create the beauty of the veiled white nun, but only its brutality, and the indomitable will of the inquisitor-general, who holds a nation's hell in his fastidious jewelled hand. And these, my paintings, plastic, gentle as cloistered nun, protected, out of touch with life. . . ."

From the street a roar, a lash, a scream, a rumble, and the clack of ass's hoofs.

"'Crucifixion,' 'Resurrection,' shall be Spain. Spain

thick with never-ending saints ready to accept martyrdom, but not to renounce a single article of faith. The Spanish Inquisition . . ."

His picture of the "Baptism," on a canvas long and narrow as a dungeon, awoke memory which had silently grown strong with distance, and with safety, and with power, to rise and speak; memory of light crashing down racked bodies in an Inquisition cell, of the threat of torture, of the pain in his hands, the face of Don Fernando Niño de Guevara, the scene from the tribunal, fire rising to the sun, consuming, as it rose, white flesh of living man. His memory swelled until it forced out words, purified his mind of detailed thoughts, and left him only essence and emotion. His brush became a living thing that owned his hand. It poised each muscle of the body that had absorbed all the knowledge of the Renaissance, to throw aside all rules and paint the fire of its tortured soul. His training held unconscious rein upon his instinct and his ecstasy. His skilled brush realized colour, stated colour, as it had never been realized or stated before —colour almost freed of form, or rather, set into a form so free of sculpture that it became a living thing, contracting and expanding, sweeping to the foreground, sinking back infinitely. With slash of brutal black and orange, tinge of green held within a predominating tonality of blue, with wealth of rich intermediary tones, El Greco, who had painted the inquisitor-general, now painted the Resurrected who rose in flame from a pyre-like group of startled soldiers—rose as sublimely as

the stamen of a flower. He painted, to the lash of scourge and screams, a "Baptism" in which flame reared to reach the avalanche of setting sun, and, within the mingled fires, he placed God with his saints about Him and, on earth, Christ. Then Spain stood interpreted, eternalized, by the pale Greek foreigner, the only man with eyes and spirit, comprehension, courage, skill to see and execute the thing. Cervantes and Lope de Vega were Spaniards, too much in sympathy with the Inquisition, too much of the soil, to estimate the fanatical cruelty and the cataleptic mysticism, the absolute release of tortured and of torturer in the *auto-de-fe*, or the universal and eternal miracle of an ideal which defies force, and perhaps creates the lust to torture, as well as the ability to endure. But El Greco understood, and wilfully destroyed his plastic forms in order to express Spain and himself in a revolt of art and spirit at one against rigidity.

He painted and repainted throughout the entire summer. When his passion left him and he became aware of the utter beauty of his work, he wished to understand it, and to word it. He remembered Patrizzi's recent book which set forth light as the first principle, centre, and generator of the universe, in contradiction to Aristotle's motive force. He looked for the quotation and wrote it down, adding: "Then colour must interpret light. Interpret only, for there is no colour which is not dull beside the sun on a white wall, and yet there is no clearer light than that which I have painted. Similarly form. Correct drawing is well

The Resurrection
El Greco, 1600

enough for portraits, which must recall a human face and figure when the sitter is away or dead; but to paint a miracle, or God. . . ."

He looked back at his painting, at loss to express the thing which was completely there.

One day his servant, María, interrupted him to say that the lawyer, Ruiz de Bustos, had called. Greco said to show him in, and tried to focus his eyes on the fat María, as she waddled out, staring at the pictures and crossing herself.

Bustos had talked and talked and talked before Greco was quite conscious of his words; then he realized that the man was talking about his painting. Well, he let him go on saying it had been so much prettier before. He even nodded slightly. Bustos was encouraged by his tired silence, thought El Greco must be overwrought and sick, wondered if he realized it, and since he was his client and listened to him now. . . .

Bustos cleared his throat. "It is not only my opinion, but the opinion of everyone in Spain, ever since your painting of the burial of Orgaz, that whereas, when you paint well, there is no one better, when you paint badly, there is no one worse. They even talk of madness, which, of course, I understand is quite ridiculous, but I think that you should know it. Obviously it is that you get tired. I can see that you are now. Sometimes you are ill. Everybody is. But when you feel that way you should not paint. You have a great deal of knowledge and of skill, but (now that I am talk-

ing) you are careless. Even in the matter of the sacred subject, the soldiers did not witness the resurrection of Our Lord. You don't mind my saying this, do you?"

"Not if you're quite sure of what you say."

"Oh, I am positive. Now, when you show these pictures, everyone will say that it is abominable work. The College will not be satisfied. I advise you against my own interests. It will only mean another suit, because they won't want to take them. Of that I am sure. I've heard rumours already. You may not have noticed, but the latest payment on account is somewhat overdue."

"Then attach the founder's estate as guaranty."

Ruiz de Bustos gasped, and sputtered, "Now, you must understand . . ."

El Greco said: "I simply tell you, if you wish to remain my man of law, attach the founder's estate, and be done with talking art—at least, until you understand that no one surpasses me in any branch of painting. And I repeat the words I said in the suit about the payment for Orgaz, that—even as the little I am paid is far inferior to the value of my sublime art—so my name will pass to posterity, who will recompense my work, and glorify its author as one of the greatest geniuses of Spanish painting."

Spain had to dance, and had to sing, and had to beat her tambourines, for there was nothing else to do.

There no longer was the strong King Philip II, bigot and recluse, yet prudent and majestic, powerful, determined, who knew how to rule, but only his hysterical son, and Lerma, the greedy favourite. The land, which had seemed taxed beyond its limit, was taxed more, and the tax weighed again on the food of starving people; but if the cattle were not killed for butcher shops, bulls were driven to the arenas, and the joyous cry of, "Toros! Toros!" ran with them through the city streets; "toros" when there was no human enemy they could confound; "toros" for a statement of Spain's power; "toros, toros," bulls' blood for forgetfulness.

The king went hungry to the festivals. His establishment cost three times that of his father, but his ducats flowed for theatres, gaieties, brocades, furs, lace, banquets before foreigners, and mostly for buying men. His whole power lay in his ability to pay for people. Everything was spent in outside show, and he was robbed by enemies, officials, favourites, everyone. He doubled the face value of copper coinage. It was counterfeited, exchanged for silver, and the silver taken out of the realm. He printed paper money. It did no good. He had no credit in his country, had to pay thirty per cent for outside loans; if he was the Emperor of the New World, the silver fleet was always captured on its way to him, the bullion used to finance wars against him. Moors dashed over in the evenings and were back in Africa by dawn, after carrying off anything they wanted from his coast, and he could

offer no resistance; besides, the Dutch, the French, the English harassed him until there was no money left for daily food.

An officer and a priest were sent from door to door, begging: "Alms for the king. Alms for the king of Spain!"

Taxes were again increased. A tax was put on every sale. El Greco refused to pay the tax they demanded for his sale of pictures. He did not ask for favours when he refused. Just as he had not followed Titian's way of sending humiliating letters begging to be paid, but had sued for his rights, so he did not follow Bassano's plea to be excused from taxes because of the excellence of his art. He simply held in court that painting, from its birth, and by its very nature, is exempt from such tax, that it is a hiring-out of services, a contract to do and make, rather than a sale, even when the picture is not painted by order; and he won a clean victory. A matador might as well ask mercy of a bull, as he of Spain. He saw Spain as the antagonist, and did not compromise. He was like a toreador without a sword. All he could do was to make the bull turn, make it obey him, and avoid its thrust, and in the end he would match immortality against inevitable death. He could touch his own immortality. It was not of God he asked it, but his work. Let the Inquisition take care of religion; he replaced it with philosophy, replacing God with light. Heretically, he asked no indulgences, asked no alms, only justice, and he saw Spain like the bull, always before him. One little slip

would be enough, and only he knew the things he covered.

"Alms, alms for the king!"

He sometimes laughed. He sometimes gave, and watched the priest and officer go down even the streets of Moors, asking "Alms for the king of Spain!"

The Moorish women gave, and danced with fear in their quivering loins. They were forbidden to speak their language, to lock their doors, to veil their faces, so they laughed brazenly, because they must, while they longed to hide themselves in such veils as Cretan women wore. They had to snap their fingers, had to dance, always in fear that the superstitious fool, the king, would be terrified into doing what Prudent Philip had refused. While Spanish nobles cheered, they had to stamp their feet, and swing their bodies, leap and whirl. (Who will protect the Moorish people now?) The voluptuous women had to dance and sing. (Who will protect them from these men who reach to them and still fear their industry, their happiness in many children, olive-faced, lovely children, whose sisters and whose mothers sway their bodies, cry and undulate, while the terror creeping down the streets seeps into them?) Oh, dance lascivious dances, girls, before these men who plan to send you off in ships sure to sink, to exile you to Africa, even if you have taken their religion to your heart, to send you off because of the unquenched Oriental blood that makes your lovely bodies dance before them; dance until you can forget the terror; dance until you make them love you and

forget their plans to castrate your strong men; oh, dance and clang your cymbals, click your castanets, while your disarmed husbands beat their ploughshares into swords and slings; dance till help can come up from the young Moroccan king; dance, for Henri IV has sworn to send La Force from France, and you shall rise to join him; dance, old Queen Elizabeth is stripped of her red beauty, but not her hate of Spain; so, dance before the grandees until they lay aside their fear of your increase; dance to draw their love; dance to drown their hatred; dance and stamp your painted feet; ring your jewelled bracelets, clap your hands and, shouting, dance!

You hear: "Alms for the king! Alms for the king of Spain!"

Then raise your heads and dance!

The Cardinal Archbishop Sandoval y Rojas, who had succeeded Quiroga, wishing to eclipse his holy fame, called on El Greco to plan his palace and his pleasure-garden of Buena Vista. Greco, with the memory of Venice and the Farnese Palace, drew the waters of the Tagus through the land, made islands where statues stood among orange, almond, and olive trees. Refreshments crossed the new lagoons on little barques, and all the beauty and brilliance of Toledo strolled among the shrubbery, paused by alabaster ponds. If there had been rest in the stark land, it would have been like Crete. If there had been solid joy, it would have been like Venice; but it was Spain, laughter pierced by the frequent cry of, "Alms for the

king!" and imposed on the knowledge that nuns were dying of starvation in their convent cells. Lope de Vega called the archbishop's domain a bower of love, and Gracian sang out, "Our women say more in a single word than an Athenian philosopher in a book."

"The best is," Greco took up, "anyone can understand that word."

El Greco, maker of the palace and the garden, stood in the arena he had made. His speech was acid. He knew that they were watching him for one mark of defeat, and he knew his weakness, knew their envy, although Angulo loved him, although Paravicino wrote in sonnets to beams of light that impudently strayed into his room: "I saw thy studio illumined by thy colouring"; and "Heaven withdraws the rays emanating from the sun's vast sphere." He knew his pictures did eclipse the day, and knew Toledo would admit it only so long as it must. Paravicino wrote: "O divine Greek, emulator of Prometheus," but El Greco knew Spain hated his acrid wit and feared the very brilliance of his talk. Sometimes he suddenly found himself alone, despondent and afraid. It was as though the garden had disappeared and he was in a dark room with his thoughts. Then gradually he heard sounds again, and saw the people all around him surprised by his lapse. He had to lead them into laughter, and such subtle talk that they would be silenced; or if any spoke of his strange absences, his friends would have the courage to reply that the codes of politeness recognize the right of intellectuals to be dull.

El Greco trained his son to his own philosophy, and Jorge Manuel followed him as closely as he could, but he did not have his father's knowledge or relentlessness. El Greco realized this, and therefore did not dare show him the whole depth of his bitterness (which he would have been at a loss to explain), but he took it to the painting of St. Francis, poured out his despair in pictures of that saint, wondering why he never could portray him as he wished, although he had returned to him almost thirty times. Finally he realized. St. Francis had prayed and striven to know Christ's suffering and love. El Greco had refused suffering. He had abjured. Then Greco asked God to grant him pain whose acceptance would not be treason against his art, honest suffering which he could not humanly avoid, and he would not beg for mercy. As to love, he loved sufferers as much as Francis had. His very refusal had made him love and understand suffering the more, and heresy was as dangerous a disease as that of the lepers whom St. Francis kissed. Once more, as to love:

Doña Gerónima wore the finest lace. He dressed her like a princess, but her face was sorrowful, her lips and eyes were sad with loneliness. Therefore she enjoyed a reputation for sanctity. They said she seemed to set no store on the world's goods, but practised the small economies and household virtues—which he disliked to see. Let her embroider; let her weave for charity, but not mend, and watch the servants, and object to wearing lace. Or let her be known as a holy woman, if that was her pleasure, but Jorge Manuel,

his beloved son—he had taught Jorge Manuel all there was to learn in art, painting, sculpture, architecture, and he trained his spirit, and gave him his love. Jorge Manuel should continue him on earth, and in his art should surpass his own immortality. Everything he had he offered him as quickly as he showed the ability to take.

Jorge Manuel remembered every word his father said. He studied his father's brilliance, and he tried. He had made his handwriting exactly like his father's, except that his was a little tight and frightened with the effort. He had made friends with his father's friends, but at times the madness came over him that he was not himself and not his father, that he had no existence. He was suffocated and terrified. He could not breathe. Then he saw young Alfonsa de las Morales, lovely gentlewoman, her soft face framed with lace, walking gracefully with a star-like flower set high in the centre of her hair. She was not one of the women from the garden, but she was all the purity Spain was famous for and Spain was losing. He followed her and sang under her window. She sat on the barred balcony and spoke to him, and he was glad he was not asked inside the house, glad that her father was an old Spanish gentleman who knew how to estimate virtue and love, knew that the only thing to do about temptation was to flee it, and would not let a young man in his home before the marriage of his daughter. So Alfonsa de las Morales came to mean all things most desired, and when at last she dropped

him a small note saying that she valued him, and that he might take advantage of this lack of modesty to send his father to speak to her father, he felt himself at last a man, and understood.

When Francisco de los Morales saw his country's greatest painter inside his home, a petitioner for his daughter's hand, he tried to hide his pride. Greco was tall and straight for fifty, his blade-like figure fastidiously clad, from the white lace of his collar down to his velvet shoes, all in rich black silk, with no ornamentation except the gold chain he had received in part payment for the altar he was making for the Illescas chapel of the Hospital de la Caridad. White lace played about his long, slim, sensitive, valuable hands. The russet beard was thinning slightly, the russet hair receded from the brow, but the brow was like old ivory, and the eyes were burning amber above his hollow cheeks, eyes that had seen the whole breadth of the Christian world, besides visions of his God. He was indeed the great artist, swift thinker, sharp speaker, deep philosopher, the painter of miracles. Morales hardly had the courage, it seemed so wonderful a match, to ask the question of blood-cleanliness. But he did ask, and Greco answered, sharply, "There is no spot on my son's purity of blood."

Morales was astonished by the arrogance of the brief reply in a tone which cut off conversation where there could have been so much pleasant talk. He did vaguely remember there had been some long and rather scan-

dalous story once, but it was forgotten, and the house of las Cuebas had received Gerónima again.

Alfonsa de las Morales spoke with lowered eyes. El Greco watched her demure loveliness and was glad for his son. He watched her go onto the balcony, knowing that Jorge Manuel was outside; saw the happiness play in colour through her magnolia skin, and was sorry that Jorge Manuel might not have her now with the emotions awakening in perfect ignorance; and yet his mind began to form his strange picture of Laocoön, with the old people tangled in the serpents, and the young man and woman moving off in great, mysterious calm. While she leaned against the window-bars, El Greco could not know that she was praising him, the father, to Jorge Manuel, or that, when she bent forward in such oblivious joy, it was to see how much resemblance their two faces held.

A year later, Doña Alfonsa said, "You can't know how beautiful it is to me!"

She was sitting with Gerónima, their feet on the brazier, both sewing for the child that grew beneath her breast. "My father cried a little; my sister not at all. I was sorry for my sister Catalina. She knows she will never marry, and still does not want to be a nun. I never shall forget the way she watched me when I dressed for the wedding. It made it easier to be dignified. But I was frightened. I had thought of

it so long, I was afraid." She laughed. "Tell me of your marriage, Doña Gerónima. Was El Greco like Jorge Manuel? Tell me. He must have been."

She bent down to her sewing, soft within the globe of light. She sewed the tiny seam, and when Gerónima did not answer, she looked up, and saw the older woman's hands stiff and still above her work, saw the straight and motionless torso rise above the light, and the head turned sideways in the shadow. She thought she must be in rapture, and watched her reverently, thinking the love of a man like Greco must be like the love of God. It must sweep over you and take you so.

Gerónima was remembering back along the words "how beautiful it is to me!" It had been like being overwhelmed by God. No, he was not like Jorge Manuel. However much this child might wish to have it so, he was not like Jorge Manuel. She should be glad for the softening touch of Spanish blood. El Greco was too great for any woman to endure. Her one mistake would have been forgotten by another man, but he had turned and grown beyond humanity to live his life in paint, free from any mortal hold, complete within himself.

There the sixteenth-century woman's heart went beyond the power of her mind, went beyond the thought of her epoch, as she realized that El Greco had become less man than an irresistible creative force. It had meant untold loneliness, suffering for which she had no language to complain, and when she turned to God,

there was a wall. She dared not ask more of God than of her husband. Dared not? She had asked again and again, but while Greco lived she could not separate her soul from earth, and still she spent her time in endless prayers and meditation and in fast, until at last she had a vision of the heavens for her sin.

Alfonsa saw her cross herself.

Her brain had stopped. She dared not remember that her Creator had appeared as an unembodied force. It had been like wind. It had been like thunder. It had been like sun on the black and silver of Toledo skies, like the essence of her husband's paintings.

Alfonsa saw her take up her work again, and bent into the glowing light, hoping that Gerónima would think it was the heat that flushed her face and brought tears to her eyes. She saw the thin legs of the older woman make a single column down her gown. Then there were mysteries she would not know until Jorge Manuel Theotocopuli was his father reproduced again.

El Greco loved to see Alfonsa wander through his house, loved the way she turned to him, as though each word he spoke held all of wisdom for her. It was agreed she was to pose for the Madonna when she had the infant in her arms, and he would be Saint Joseph in the background, merely there to take care of her. All this, which had been hidden from him with Gerónima, this complete flowering of a woman, was exquisite to him. When at last the son was born, El

Greco ruffed his own child's hair and shook him in his excess of joy, asking what his name would be.

"Gabriel de los Morales," Jorge Manuel Theotocopuli replied.

Irene would have understood El Greco's laughter as he laughed out after Jorge Manuel had spoken and gone away, laughter which began as self-flagellation, laughter which brought life cowering to his feet, laughter which beat out his bitterness with the whip of self-esteem.

So then, once more it was to be paint, nothing but paint to give him immortality and perpetuate Theotocopuli. It might be just. El Greco did not complain, nor was he resentful of his son or less gentle with Doña Alfonsa, who was afraid and sorrowful. Paint! He had given his life to paint, and his emotion all to paint, and nothing could make him suffer, so long as he could paint, so long as no one hurt him through his painting, and there was no way to strike him there. He had given them great work and honest work. He stood among his canvases.

The six pictures for the Hospital de la Caridad of Illescas were no longer in his studio. He had done them and had designed the altars with that plastic gentleness again which overcame him every time he idealized, and that so easily: Gerónima, the nun, his own son, his son's wife. Then strict realization returned, destroyed his peace, and made him distort his figures to express his own racked soul. The altars with those paintings had been set in place, and the usual

quarrel had begun about his price. He would make them pay, not only because he wanted the money to spend, but they should pay him for his broken dream. It was the only means to disprove his defeat and to make them value his emotion.

This was only one more carnal bond cut away, one further mortification of his heart. It had no bearing on his love of paint; love that had given colour life which it had never known before; and more than that, love which extended to the material that he used, the weight and density of pigment, the sweep, length, form, and freedom of his brush-strokes, the very surface of his pictures. He ran his hands over a painting of St. Francis. He pressed his hands against it. Blind him and this would still be beautiful! He loved the touch of paint as Michel Angelo had loved the body of stone. Men thought his pictures were quickly and carelessly done. They did not guess the depth of devotion which made him return to them many times to work with all the feeling that a surgeon would bring to cutting into his child, to work without destroying life, but to spare no defect. He had done that unrelentingly, and if the layman did not understand how difficult it was, those who tried to imitate him knew . . . therefore there was no "school of Greco." He had never compromised in paint, nor refused to suffer for it. He had fought and bluffed. He had endured exile from Crete, Bassano, Rome, and even Venice (for he could have pleased the Titian) in order to paint

in his own way. He had foresworn his faith, condemned his soul, and he was repaid. Paint had used his flesh and used his nerves, but there was his production. All other things were passing. All other things had their own incomprehensible will, and their evasions, while paint alone answered fully, frankly, and at once, taking everything, demanding more. It depended only on himself. It did not hold secret rancour to strike back unexpectedly.

At this time, a scholastic, cloistered gentleman, Father José de Siguënza, preacher, poet, librarian of the Escorial, who had grown old in holiness, lived on only to complete the great history of his Order, and of the building of the royal monastery: a work to honour God and Philip Second, his lamented king. He wrote tome after tome, losing himself in memories of the days when extensive scaffoldings were covered with workmen from every country, of every social grade, who spoke so many tongues that few could understand each other, and no two had the same ideas. There had been constant quarrels and complaints, contradictory orders and intrigue among these people, come of their own free will, in an effort to advance themselves in their various lines. In the midst of constant outcry and din of hammering, others had been modest and retiring, working quietly in private, and these

comprised some of the greatest artists of the world. He wrote proudly, lovingly of them and of their work, each one individually (goldsmiths, embroiderers of altar cloths, bookbinders, illuminators of small letters and of capitals, miniaturists, painters on wood, painters of fresco, painters on canvas). But in the Seventeenth Discourse of the Fourth Book he was halted by the story which still exasperated and perplexed him after twenty years.

His majesty had been most generous, as befitted so great a king. He had overpaid the artist, and ordered both parties to let the subject drop, in order that no harm might come to his reputation, adding that the painter had done his best and was less to blame than those who had recommended him. But Philip, in his goodness, did not fully estimate the strength of the artist's partisans, nor the importance of the affair. It was more than the matter of one canvas. It struck at the very foundations of life and art—whether a single person has the right to follow his individual instincts against established rule and custom, regardless of whether he knows the rules or not. What would become of kingdoms and hierarchies? There he saw that God had permitted his anger to blot a perfect page, and recognized the warning. He must not let unpriestly fury stain his work, but write the scene clearly and impersonally, trusting that its teaching would impose itself. Carefully, then, in the least possible words, Father Siguënza produced this most complete document of the taste of academies and kings:

Of a certain Dominico Greco, who still lives and does excellent things in Toledo, we here conserve a painting of St. Mauricio and his soldiers which he made for the altar of those saints; it did not please His Majesty (which is stating it mildly) as it pleased only a small group, although they say that it is painted with a great deal of art, and that its author is scholarly, which is apparent from the excellent things from his hand. In this, there are many opinions and tastes; it seems to me that the difference between things done with science and art, and those that lack these qualities, is that the former satisfy everyone and the latter only a few, since art can do no better than to correspond with knowledge and nature, and in every picture, and this impresses every soul; that which is badly done, but with some slight cleverness or verisimilitude, may appeal to the emotions of the ignorant, and thus please the uncultured and thoughtless. To conclude (as our Mute said in his own way), the Saints should be painted in such manner that no one can restrain himself from falling in prayer before them, but devotion should overwhelm him, and the principal effect and aim of painting should be to serve this end.

Siguënza's worth and learning raised him to the position of prior of the Escorial before his work was finished. He lived to see its publication, and then, supported by the prayers of the brotherhood, went forth to his reward.

VIII. The Return

El Greco heard laughter in the Spanish waters, used to carrying off the ash of heretics; laughter in the Spanish winds, used to sprinkling the ash from field to field; and laughter in the Spanish voices: "So that was it! Then that was what had passed at the Escorial, and Spain has been deluded twenty years!"

Greco was dark before it, as he had been that day before the court, tall and dark and silent, his pale face grey under his russet hair, his still lips showing a blue line between his russet moustache and his beard. His enemies were given power again, and he was alone. Of course, there was the little group around him—Góngora, Paravicino, Angulo. There always was a little group of friends. Once it had seemed old, then middle-aged. Now they seemed almost boys, although Góngora was no younger than Herrara had been, but Paravicino was the age of his own son; so that he felt that only he had changed and that it was the same group, as a traveller returning recognizes the same pool in a stream, although the waters are replaced, and that which was deep to the boy is shallow to the man. Clovio and Herrara had been protectors; these lads leaned on him, taking the words he used about painting, and applying them to poetry, and following him through the same laughter, the same scorn.

El Greco asked whether carrying one art over into another does not lead to decadence. "My sculpture is fluid, and see how Michel Angelo has ruined paint!"

"You give a soul to wood," Góngora said; and Paravicino; "Where there is less parentage, there is better marriage. The spirit is transmitted without the dogma, admired and not imitated."

El Greco smiled. These lads hardly noticed the statement for which he had been driven from Rome. He had repeated it to other Spaniards. Some were horrified, some laughed. He could not be hurt by that any more. But to Paravicino, he answered, "They are good companions, literature and paint."

He liked these hungry poets in clerical hoods, cynics who had entered orders merely to exist, and yet men of exemplary lives, all friars except the rich Dr. Angulo, who knew himself the least talented and received the most official praise. "Ah, well," they laughed. "After all, it is more rare to be rich and sensitive than to be a poet now in Spain."

El Greco envied them their laughter, envied them their youth, young enough to hope to end the battle which will never end; and while he envied them, he realized again that he had refused suffering, not only for his faith, but for his art. He had refused to face the consequence of having failed to satisfy the king. Now it returned to him when he was tired with years. "Ah, God and St. Francis, let me be grateful for this other chance. Let me not ask that the cup be taken from my lips."

Spain had turned the struggle back to the beginning so completely that he could almost think Alfonsa his own wife, and Gabriel his son, and that the Cathedral suit about the "Despoliation" had begun again, for as soon as Siguënza's report was published, the directors of the Hospital of Illescas stated, almost in the Cathedral's words, that, since in the picture of the "Virtue of Charity" for the high altar which contains the image of Our Lady, El Greco had painted two figures, with helmets and breast-plates wide open showing, with great indecency for the place, the faces of people well known in Toledo, that the canvas should be taken down for this and the many other defects which it contains, and that the prior should have a fitting picture made by some good hand in Madrid, who knows how to paint.

El Greco felt he lived an old man's memory. He said: "I almost repeat 'I don't know Castilian well.' They say 'know how to paint,' and talk theological technicalities. I answer in their words, but cannot meet them on ideas, for the phrase becomes a pitcher with a leak. Its meaning spills all over. If only I were the age of my own son!"

Jorge Manuel had been too delicately reared. He did not have the eyes, or hands, or ruggedness of soul to carry on the fight. El Greco held him to the studio. He gave him work to do. Jorge Manuel was pious and obedient. He tried too hard. Aye, but it was difficult for him, with the laughter in the wind, and the laughter in the smoke reared straight on windless

days, and he was young yet, at the age, El Greco thought, that he had been in Rome, and his Roman paintings, he told himself, could not have been much good. They were praised for their technical skill, and Jorge Manuel had precision and efficiency. It was for him, El Greco, to take the laughter from the wind. Let Paravicino say, "They have to fight you, for your fame would change the human temperament too much." (Then Paravicino had been glum, beaten with his fingers on his knee, and finally made a note: "Your fame would change the human clime of earth," smiled, and been gay again.) El Greco had to fight back to make them keep his picture on the altar, make them pay in order to open the road again for Jorge Manuel, that he might take up and glorify Theotocopuli.

The lawsuit, that had started in Illescas, followed him to Toledo, and dragged on with increasing bitterness, fatigue, and cost. Painting, which had made him rich, was making him poor again, and through an unimportant canvas, and still they never met on ideas. Words had become lying thieves of thought, muttering imbeciles, anything but a means of communication. What had it to do with pictures when people laughed, "He thinks that he is painter to the king!"

But Toledo, tired of having called itself deluded, now said that the delusion was his own. It whispered that he had gone mad and that the crazy man believed that he was painter to the king. His counsel was mocked in court, the suit prolonged unbelievably. The

church asked the faithful in confession to give more money to carry on the case. They had spent more than the price of the picture, and Greco more than the largest payment he could hope to receive; but it was no longer for the money that he fought.

He said, "Behold, St. Francis, I have accepted poverty."

Toledo did not know he had replaced his carved bed by a soldier's cot. It did not know that chairs, chests, and tables were carried each night from the house, to be sold secretly. It saw the way he wore his velvet cape and embossed sword, and still heard singing in his home. But instead of paid musicians, it was the poets who sang nasally, beating their guitars:

"These blow flutes,
Those flutes blow;
This way honour,
That *sanbenito*."

Care-free words to sobbing tunes, Spanish music, and El Greco was not the only one whose doublet covered hunger, not the only one whose house was emptying slowly.

Gerónima did not complain. He wished she would, instead of waiting for him, as the Madonna might have waited for the body of her Son. Her eyes grew narrow, dark, and wise. He wondered if she believed in his madness; in it with him, or about it with the others. Gerónima was the one person who ever seemed to have moved with him through the static world. She

aged; but she was static. He watched her while the poets droned:

"These blow flutes,
Those flutes blow . . ."

He wished he dared to talk to her. He had gone from her, and she was waiting too patiently. If only she showed bitterness, but she seemed to care no more for poverty than she had for wealth. Only he had loved these things that he let them take away to sell for very little, so that the sale should not be known: the cabinet with the heavy silver locks; the richly carved, brocaded chairs; Illesca's golden chain. She could not say he cared for money now. It was his art, and while the poets sang, he raised his head and spread his hands. "Behold, I have accepted suffering, O Lord!"

It was years since the suit had begun. El Greco's madness was an accepted thing. Men pointed out the way he wandered through the streets, and said: "Like Don Quixote, he could deceive us, for he is sane on other subjects, and talks reasonably until you touch upon his madness. Listen!"

They questioned, and foolishly, El Greco answered in his wish to see their understanding come; but they laughed and went off from him, carrying his phrases and repeating them to groups who swayed with laughter, broke up and spread repeating them again: "He says that Michel Angelo was a good man, but couldn't paint. In contradiction to the ancients, from Aristotle

Doña Gerónima de las Cuebas
El Greco, 1604

down, he says that painting has no laws, is not a craft. It is a pity, for he had talent, but he has gone mad in trying to be different from all others, and carried his madness over into his life, trying to talk differently from other men. No one would believe it, but it's true that he puts his hands to his pictures many times, and works hard to make the big, crude blots. I call that working much for very little; and when I told him that, he said, 'It's the old battle of Titian,' so you see, it was from trying to paint differently from his master that he went insane, and it has come to a point where he cannot do the simplest thing correctly."

In his home, El Greco said: "If I could only bring it down to paint! That is my language. Let me answer them in paint."

Then Dr. Angulo, who had been named alderman, gave Greco the order to do a canvas of Toledo with a map, for the City Hall. El Greco forgot the quarrels, and lost himself in the joy of painting, and painting for an appreciative friend. He painted Toledo with its gardens falling to the Tagus, with the river gods below, and the Virgin with her angels in the sky. He told Jorge Manuel to do the map, and the map was excellently done; but Jorge Manuel pointed out to him that he had overlooked the Hospital of Tavera.

Greco said, "It hid the town."

The boy argued. He never would have done a thing like that. El Greco painted the hospital in reduced size, and set it in an empty space, but he showed the wrong view. Dr. Angulo pleaded that this, if done

correctly, might make a great difference in Spain's attitude towards him. El Greco flew into a fury and told Angulo to keep to poetry. Later he saw Gerónima speaking gently to the young man, even heard her tell him: "We owe you so much already. To have stood surety throughout this hopeless suit . . . "

There had been that, and more, and money, but this was a matter of art. He called Jorge Manuel and painted him on the canvas, holding the map in his hand, as if to say: "My *child* can do correct, efficient things." But while he painted, the boy looked so young, he thought, if he takes longer than I did to develop, he may create a greater thing; and again, this whole new generation grows more slowly. Compare Góngora with Herrara, or it may be that they all seem young, or their work immature, simply because I am old. It is hard to estimate, and he painted lovingly and tenderly, revoicing his former phrase, to say *my* child.

But Angulo persisted.

El Greco said: "It is as correct as possible. . . . You asked to have the town. . . . No one ever sees correctly, but they don't realize that."

He knew he could not set his hand to the canvas without destroying it, and still Angulo stood there and contradicted without talk, and Greco answered, answered. It was the more maddening in that he was his friend, and after he had argued, Angulo would only say, "Put your argument on your canvas."

"I shall."

He took his smallest brush and wrote carefully in the corner of the map:

I found myself forced to place the Hospital of Don Juan Tavera in the form of a reduced-sized model, because, not only would it have hidden the Gate of Visagra, but its cupola mounted in such a way that it rose above the city; and so, once having placed it as a model and changed its locale, I preferred to show its façade rather than its other sides, and for the rest, its position in the city is seen the map.

Likewise, in the story of Our Lady who bears the chasuble to Santo Ildefonso, for decorative purposes, and to make the figures large, I profited in a certain manner by the essence of celestial bodies, as we see them: lights, which perceived from afar, and small as they may be, seem large to us.

It was the first canvas he had ever been glad to see taken from his studio, and when it was gone he painted a picture of Toledo for himself, as it was to him (set in a range of hills, its buildings and its bridges ashy white and grey, outlining its black crags under a sky of smoke and flame; the mystic city of agony and exaltation, Toledo, as it is in spirit and in memory), and when Angulo admired it he said: "There's not a building that's in place, and not a spot on earth from which you could see the city and the hills, and yet you tell me that it is Toledo, and it is, as Toledo exists in the heart of you and me who know her, but not as she is seen; and the life within the paint gives life to the city, without a figure in sight. Had you noticed that?"

It was, in fact, the first landscape ever painted with-

out map or animated thing, without any purpose external to itself.

Toledo stood a moment, mystified before the canvas in the City Hall, unable to understand quite what was meant by the ambiguous words, and then it laughed.

"He can no longer execute the simplest of things. He has to write his explanation, and still he thinks that he can paint. He calls himself painter to the king!"

It had become a children's game to bow before him in the street, crying: "Hail, great Greco, painter to the king!" to follow him with wreaths of prickly weeds, shouting, "Accept these laurels from the king!"

El Greco saw that the old fight demanded the old answer. It would not be put in terms of paint. They would be as able to overlook a perfect canvas now, as in the period of his glory they had been able to overlook all faults; so, to impose his painting, he must be painter to the king. He made the sketch for a magnificent canvas which he sent to Philip III as a project for a Gloria to be placed over his father's tomb.

Lerma was with Philip when the picture was brought in, and although he neither understood nor cared much about art, he was glad of the distraction. The king was afraid. His gestures were hysterical. He had granted the edict for the expulsion of the Moors, and now Archbishop Ribera, who had been strongest in demanding it, recoiled before its realization and asked

that the Moors be allowed to stay in the province of Valencia. The fields were laden with their crops. Let them stay to save the harvest. The king was terrified.

Lerma said: "The world might well mock us, if we turned back from a thing once started. Your prudent father himself left complete plans."

"Aye," Philip answered, "but he did not carry them out."

Lerma held to the subject. He hated the Moors with the fury of the Valencian who had seen their light ships arrive on holidays, bombard the festival, and sail away, without anybody knowing how they could have passed through the Spanish fleet that stood in sight to guard the coast, nor how they would escape, but knew they would. He reminded Philip of the conspiracy unearthed between the Moors and Spain's great enemy, King Henri IV of France, and of the letters James I had sent him when treaty with England was signed, showing that the filthy spawn of Mahomet, of doubtful Christianity, had plotted with Elizabeth against the land which had given them home. Then he tried to swing the subject (surely for the moment Philip would not act) to speak of the great relief to Spain that Elizabeth was dead, and James I disliked pirates and respected the Spanish king above all the other monarchs joined.

But Philip III was trembling with the abject fear of the pleasure-loving sovereign who had inherited two scourges and used none. He repeated that Ribera

was afraid. His father had refused the thing. He could still withdraw the edict. No one knew.

Lerma said: "It was different in your father's reign. Now Old Christians have been depopulated through entering religious orders, through dissipation and disease and war, while the Moors increase with early marriages and industry. In another generation they will outnumber Christians. They are the sponge of the nation's wealth, protected by the devil, for though they work the poorest lands, they are always rich, while Old Christians are poor."

It was maddening that, once he had made his sovereign act, he should hesitate again. He must turn his mind from this. For the moment Queen Margarita would not interfere, with urging her husband to realize himself king, to use his own judgment and actually rule. He had given her enough presents to buy her silence. The Venetian jewellery alone should have sufficed, but because of the importance of this affair, he had added Flemish tapestries and French brocades woven with threads of gold. If the king could be held off from the subject until it was too late to retract, this very year might see the land cleansed of Moorish blood. But Philip fidgeted and did not speak, and the silence became such as only the monarch might break; therefore it was with relief that Lerma saw Juan Preboste, carrying the picture, ushered in.

"From Domenicos Theotocopuli?"

Lerma explained, "The Greek of Toledo."

They looked at the canvas, and the king asked Lerma

his opinion. The composition was too elaborate, and the meaning too intricate for the favourite to reply, so he simply said: "If we are to have a Gloria, why should it not be painted by some Spaniard at the court? We have been overrun by foreigners, and there is no particular reason for a Greek."

Juan Preboste burst into talk.

"Know better than to interrupt! That his master was trained in Venice! Your Majesty, Spain is so much greater than Venice, that it is humiliating to have such a statement made. Spain has too long had her art dictated by Italy. Now may she state herself in her own way. It is true that Greco has lived among us a long time. Man, is he Góngora's friend?"

"He is, Your Excellency, Góngora . . . "

"That is enough. Your Majesty, I had not realized, but this must have led Góngora to his *estilo culto* —that new, affected poetry which our Lope so aptly styles damned-cultured-gibberish, in which he tries to set our own Castilian into Greek and Latin forms, and so rearranges words that they take on meanings they never had before and have no right to have, because words—if we have to begin to think about words, which have become habitual—where are we going to end? The worst is that he has just enough culture so that his partisans can say those who don't understand him are ignorant. Or, worse than that, he can use the classic forms as well as anyone, so that I am at a loss to understand this affectation, unless he thinks that it will bring him wealth, or make him talked about.

No one can return his insult by calling him unlettered. His bitter and destructive wit . . . "

The king broke in: "I like Cervantes' wit. There is satire and it never harms important things. He's fought the Moors, he was their prisoner, and he knows enough of life to be a thorough Spaniard."

"He wants the Moors' expulsion."

"He can want things of that kind easily. He is a literary man. But I mean his Don Quixote, his Knight of the Woeful Figure," the king laughed, and Lerma joined him. Then Philip asked, "What sort of jokes does Góngora write?"

"There's a sonnet about Madrid—I can't quote it word for word, but it begins with 'a bestial life of sorcery,' runs through 'vain pretentions . . . carriages and lackeys, a hundred pages, thousands live with virgin swords . . . lying judges . . . indecent streets . . . eternal mud . . . limping warriors,' and ends: 'This is Madrid, or better call it Hell!'"

"He writes that, when everybody else knows Madrid as the eighth wonder of the world! He has his own peculiar sense of humour, which isn't Spanish."

While the King spoke, Lerma motioned the servant to show Juan Preboste out, since His Majesty was not interested.

"Nor do I call it poetry," he took up, "whose object is to amuse, charm, or lead men to higher thoughts. This comes nearer to revolt." And when the door had been closed long enough so that he knew he spoke in privacy: "I believe this same Góngora is the one

who writes most of the songs sung on the Liars' Parade, which attack the so-called extravagance of your royal court, and the corruption of your gentlemen, even of myself. It is all consistent with his desire to be conspicuous which makes him hold with foreigners and try to force us to read our tongue like a different language. In his attempt, he becomes so tangled in himself, that he has even to invent a new punctuation, and, giving, as I said, new meanings to old words, they become not the familiar things they are, but like growing ideas with a life of their own. It makes me uncomfortable. And with all this, he whines about the poverty of the Muse. The Muse has never been so highly paid, or paying, to men, provided they know how to write. Let him learn from Lope de Vega, and not a foreign painter. Lope realizes justly that those who pay for entertainment have the right to be pleased, not pricked. A man who has the impudence to write of me as . . . "

The king was laughing. "Lope! Remember in—which was that piece?—where the lover, thinking he stabs a rival, stabs a skin of stolen wine. Oh, how I laughed! And then in 'Punishment without Revenge,' where the husband finds his son has been the lover of his own second wife, and, since a deed of vengeance would mean disgrace, he binds and gags the woman, ties her to a chair, covers her over, and commands the son to kill, telling him it is his enemy, and then he calls the people in to execute the son who slew his own

step-mother. . . . There is an edifying scene. There's Spanish art."

When Juan Preboste told him, Greco's answer was to God, spoken very clearly: "Then may Thy will be done."

The sketch had been his great effort to redeem himself with man. Its failure broke the last bond between his work and earth; so, although the pain was always in his hands and drawing near his heart, he no longer studied his old, marked "System to Preserve the Health." It was Gerónima who carried in the ladder to reach it down, but the book was written in Italian, which he would not help her read. His soul had become impatient in his body, and did not know what still held it there. It made a restless flame within his clear, keen eyes, but his grizzled beard grew ragged, and his head rose bald and high above his uneven brows. He ate when food was given him. Other times he was hungry. That made an ache which came and went. The other aches were constant, but he hardly noticed pain any more. The only thing he cared for was to paint.

He stayed within his house and garden as though it were a monastery, but he was glad when the others came—Spaniards, Greeks, his poets, Angulo most of all. He liked to hear them sing and talk. It gave a basis for his thoughts; but he spoke more when stran-

gers questioned him, than he did to his friends. Angulo was always finding him new commissions. El Greco said: "It's strange. You are a religious man and know the vanity of the world; and you are a reasonable man, and still you want to tie me."

But Gerónima was grateful. Poor Gerónima!

Papers and papers they brought him. He signed them thoughtlessly. He hardly knew how the suit with the Hospital at Illescas had ended, excepting that the picture remained. He almost forgot that canvas. The quarrel had taken it from him.

Then there were other papers in which he begged and prayed, as in the beginning, that some one would pay some money due, in order that he might continue working. The contracts were for portraits of the Apostles and the Lord for the Church of St. Peter the Martyr; and for the Hospital of Tavera outside the city walls a high altar, and lateral altars, with columns, painting, sculpture, all written out in detail, making a long paper, which he glanced over, smiling slyly. It said: Item . . . Item . . . Item . . . which gave the directors the right to visit his studio when they saw fit, and to suspend payment if the work did not satisfy. Well, he thought that he would know how to get rid of the directors if they dared to come. And Item, he must do the work himself, as it was awarded him for his individual skill. That must be spleen left over from the Bayona altar of the year before, which he had given Jorge Manuel to paint. They did not say the boy had not done well, and moreover, another

Item included (as he had had all contracts include for years) that Jorge Manuel might finish the work in case of his own disability or death. Once he had been afraid of that aching of his hands, but now he thought they need not fear his disability, only that he might decide to give no more of his pictures to a world which never looked at painting, but sat down solemnly to judge how many ducats he earned, and whether he was painter to the king.

Now they reminded him that he had signed a contract over a year ago to do an "Ascension of the Virgin" for the Church of San Vicente in Toledo. He had promised to do it in eight months. Angulo saw what he had painted, told him it was beautiful, to send it off; but for Greco it was not finished. It was always changing in his hands. Each time he stopped work, it seemed fine, but when he returned, it was a different thing. The colour grew brighter every day, and the form more full, and the canvas was asking something of him to which he had not yet been able to reply. They kept telling him to send it off, as though the church had anything to do with this affair between his painting and himself. He wanted to lay it aside, to work on other pictures, then take it up again. He worked on it in a locked studio, and kept it shut away. There was something it was asking of him, and he would answer it.

The end of the year of 1609, the Moors were expelled from the province of Valencia. In the year of

1610, from the window high above the river and the plain, El Greco saw them go, the Moors of Castile, driven by the king's decree. Five hundred thousand people in these two years were exiled from Spain. He saw them moving in a steady stream: black Moorish skins, skins pale with Spanish blood, veiled women with silver caps and long, bright draperies, tall men in Oriental silks and heavy jewellery, freed from the fear of the Inquisition, went praying to Allah, rejoicing in the return to the home of their blood's memory. They were going south, and going east, for the growing crescent of Mahomet stretched as far as Crete. These were his people, moving off beneath a flight of birds, with happy little animals running at their feet, healthy dogs and cats and children, and some favourite lambs, all trudged solidly along the road, where gallows were erected, and corpses of some of the greedy Old Christians, who had tried to rob and murder them, were hung.

El Greco, watching, felt his Oriental blood stream with them. He wished to join them, but they were being sent, and he had no right to go with them. He remembered the old monk saying, *he put forth his hand and took her back unto him into the ark;* but although El Greco too had found no rest for the sole of his foot, the hand was not extended to him, and Theotocopuli *returned not unto him any more.* He could only watch, and envy them their singing. They who were allowed to take off only what they could carry on their backs, were taking in them all that remained of the wealth of

Spain. Though Spain had kept one-tenth of her Moors to teach her agriculture, she could not find their secret, which was the song of the worker's blood to the soil, the caress of his fingers on the seed and root, the constant intercourse and confidence, which Spaniards would never learn; so the fields would wither, and the oxen die, while those who went were singing.

Birds flew over them, circling, soaring, descending, and they themselves were like bright birds, with draperies fluttering, voices rising. That was what the canvas asked him. The "Ascension of the Virgin" became a dream of birds, the group like one tremendous parrot poised above the city of Toledo, while each angel floated red, yellow, green, the whole gamut of colours.

But gradually the sounds of gladness ended. The skins were paler, and the clothes less bright. Now those who went were moaning over crucifixes. These had been born in the Christian faith. These did not know the ancient language. They had never prayed to Mahomet's god. At night they called to Christ. They cried: "The great day of his wrath is come. Mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us. . . ."

His soul went with them. Why could he not go? He could no longer paint the birds, but only a vision of the Apocalypse (these exiles as they prayed at night) and while he painted, he repeated, "The day of his wrath is come!"

Houses crumbled as they went, and the dying fig trees dropped untimely fruit. The moon was red at night, and Greco watched them all the day, murmuring

with them, "The day of his wrath . . . "; "and this great multitude, which no man could number, are they which came out of great tribulation, and the Lamb shall lead them to living fountains, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What matter that the people in his house were telling him to put this work aside? That the Church of St. Peter the Martyr was asking for the portraits, and he was not working on the "Ascension" any more? His mind was with the exiles. He yearned for Crete, and painted the "Apocalypse" for himself. He recognized no responsibility to the world. But they repeated their demand persistently. No one had ordered this canvas. No one was paying for it. He did not care until he saw that he was running out of paint and that there would be no new money to buy more. Then he turned to the Apostles. St. Paul. That face was almost like his own. He retouched it to make it more so, put a paper in his hand, and wrote on the paper:

> To Titus, consecrated by the laying on of hands, first archbishop of the Church of the Cretans.

This was his statement of his blood, his return to heresy. Now let them expel him with the rest. But the pictures were taken away and hung, and no one spoke of the inscription, possibly because he had written it in Greek.

When he returned to his window, the road was bare except for starving curs, winged and beaked things

swooping, furred and clawed things leaping up to swing on the corpses under the gallows-trees; black swarms of beasts with their muzzles met on a fallen body, high eagles, vultures, crows, clean skeletons, and howls of wolves, then only the level arrow of a flying stork.

Now *shall men seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

Already the churchmen groaned that baptismal founts were idle, that there were no more weddings, and that the people fled the realm to escape starvation. Roads and streets were heaped with empty garments bought or stolen from the Moors, and laid out to be sold again; limp silks and caps, and lace and bracelets, empty veils that covered memories of Crete, bodiless, all of them. The houses that crumbled would never be rebuilt. The oxen that died would never be replaced. Gardens would become deserts. Life had gone, and Greco had watched it go—all but the little bit that still stayed stubbornly in him.

The directors of the Hospital of Don Juan Tavera were demanding that he start his work for them. Angulo urged him to begin. They had given him much money. He said he did not care for the money any more. Angulo told him Gerónima was starving.

He reminded him how she had come to him, and that it was his duty to give her home.

Beautiful Gerónima, she had brought him peace, and that was why this land owned him. He had not repaid. He had taken as a gift that which was a trust, and his debt was expressed in the paintings in the Church of San Domingo el Antíguo. He would take care of that.

He arranged for an altar and a vault within that church. He would build and pay for the altar, and the vault was to be his forever, the home he offered Gerónima, himself, their son, and their son's wife and child, and all their blood. He sent Jorge Manuel out to make a careful contract, which he confirmed, and set to work on the altar. What was the "Baptism" for the Hospital to him?

After that, Angulo brought more commissions, but for Jorge Manuel, some for sculpture, some for architecture, and El Greco thought he would be free. He worked on many paintings, planning one and then another, to set over his tomb. There was a strangeness in these pictures, more than at any time before, with bodies more emaciated and eyes more anxious to meet God. But still Angulo interrupted him. The "Ascension" was done. It was a thing of utter beauty. He had spent five years on it, and the church did not come to estimate its value, and to pay him, although he had sent them word. In spite of that, Angulo insisted that he must start the canvas for the Hospital of Tavera; otherwise the directors would complain, have

his contract with San Domingo broken, and he would lose his tomb.

So El Greco began the "Baptism," but it was hard to conceive that subject in a land which was drained of blood—a land of death and starvation, empty pearl-embroidered garments hawked throughout the streets, and poor, ragged Moorish people trying to return; those who had been stopped at the borders, those who came back from Africa, telling that they had been stoned and persecuted, and many slain, because they had spoken the Spanish language only and held its Christian faith. The Saviour saw this world and, descending to it, could have found no peace in the baptism. The angels, who witnessed it, must have wept more bitterly than at the Cross. The Father must have mourned, and His dove been cast of tears.

El Greco painted in an intensity of grief—fleshless bodies, drooping robes—and while he painted, he prayed St. Francis to intervene with God, and to allow that before the picture was ended he might know Christ's suffering and His Passion, the agony on the Cross.

Then the unfinished canvas became a thing of moving life before his eyes. It became his memory, his present and his future, the Baptism that contained the Passion, the beginning and the end. He stepped back to study it. The whole thing quivered. Not a line of paint stood still. It moved his soul to ecstasy. It filled his eyes with tears. The tall canvas misted, and the pains that had been running through his body

swarmed to points within his feet and palms, cut a lance's gash within his heart. It was to him the stigmatization, answering his prayer, forewarning him of death. His hands stiffened and his brushes fell.

Jorge Manuel leapt from his drawing-table and picked them up. Greco had not been conscious of him in the studio. Now he saw him with his own brushes in his hand, standing before his unfinished painting, holding the brushes to him whose hands were paralyzed. His eyes, which for years had seen objects only as they were mirrored in his strange, distorting mind, saw each thing in the studio clearly now, objectively. Three painting-tables, three benches, three ladders, a pine table with a drawer, one stone for grinding colours, two candlesticks, one candle, an altar frame without its columns, one twisted column by it, sketches, wax and clay figures he had used as models, miniatures of paintings he had sold, many unsold pictures, a vial of oil, this canvas to be finished, a little varnish, a little paint, and a man of thirty-six standing with his brushes in his hand—thirty-six years old, Jorge Manuel, his son.

The contract said Jorge Manuel might end this painting.

Greco said: "Now work on it. It is your time."

He watched him, helpless before the helpless canvas, useless brushes in those supple hands, and his own hands had stiffened. It was like watching after death.

Jorge Manuel did nothing. He bowed his head. Behind him was his drawing-table neatly ranged with

careful architectural designs, before him the chaos of the unfinished painting. The brushes were a bunch of hair-tipped sticks clutched in his hand. El Greco waited. He recognized that his son could never paint.

Yet "Paint!" he commanded. "There is no one but you now to paint. I have given you all I had in life to give. I do not mind that you have denied my name. But my work is here unfinished, and you. . . . Put the brushes into your left hand. Take one only in your right, and paint. What is the matter? Set it to the picture. Let me see you. Life has been too easy for you. You have not had to fight. You have not had to suffer. You live in your own country. The thing my home denied me, the thing I had to fight across the world for, is put into your very hands. You have been too protected. It has been too easy for you. That's why you can't paint."

Then Jorge Manuel turned in fury: "Easy, you say. You do not know. To be the son of a man called mad, a man called genius, to be the bastard of a saint! To hear the mockery and the praise, to be afraid of both, afraid of inheriting the prophecy of your insanity, and to see my first attempts in art set beside the greatness of your genius! Never to be able to believe in my own work, but to see it always weighed against your accomplishment! You call that easy! Then to hear their laughter at your work, but feel no other painting could be true. The impossible burden of my reverence!"

El Greco struck him with his senseless hand. "Hate

me—hate both your parents! You were conceived in our sin and selfish pleasure without thought for your life. Despise us. We wronged you . . . only paint!"

But when he walked out of the studio, swaying on his painful feet, and with his paralyzed hands curled inward at the finger tips, Jorge Manuel only wanted to drop his brushes, follow him, and kiss his gown.

El Greco walked through empty rooms. He had not seen their emptiness before. Not a stick of furniture until the regal banquet-hall where a canvas cupboard faced the massive walnut one and the great dining-table, not enough chairs, two pathetic earthen jars filled with leaves which Gerónima must have cut. Doña Gerónima! He was walking towards her room, but he went very slowly, his feet hurt him so. In the halls were the linen chests. He looked in them. They were empty, but when he crossed the library, not one of his two hundred volumes had been removed.

He saw Gerónima alone in her room. He thought it must be evening and cold, because of the way the brazier glowed. Behind her was the crimson damask canopy, and a carved walnut half-bed, the desk with the leather lining and, on it, his dagger and his embossed sword. He heard voices from another room, Alfonsa talking with her sister and her mother, the child's high laughter, and the voice of the servant Jũ. But Gerónima sat alone, as though she had been waiting for him. She was beautiful, her youth worn off by years of patient loneliness and pain, but her face still held its

beauty with the passion of a promontory that holds itself within the sea. She looked as though she had waited every day for him, beaten upon by the fact that he never came, called to by the voices of those who sewed and spun with her grandchild running back and forth from one to the other. The boy's footsteps had grown quite loud, for he was ten. These sounds had become her memory while she waited alone.

At last she looked up, and El Greco stood before her. He spoke, and she thought that she had lived this scene before. He was making a confession, putting himself wholly into her hands. When he would have finished, she was going to rise, take him in her arms, and accept his pain, his weakness, all of him, together with his strength, and he would be her lover always after that. What matter that he stooped so, that his beard was white, his head was bald, and that his lower lip drooped wearily? He was her lover, and she would hold him to her breast. She had dressed herself each day in the white lace he had given her—for this.

He was saying: "I have destroyed, and destroyed only. I leave an empty house, unfinished work, an overburdened son . . . and you, Gerónima, what have I not done to you? Do you hate me? Are you one of those who call me mad?"

She stood and put her arms around him. His head was hot. His temples beat unevenly beneath her soft, cool fingers; but while she spoke, the blood flowed back into her heart. She said: "Dominicos, I love you.

You don't know what that means, or you would not have asked me. But I love you, Domenicos, therefore I know that all things said against you are untrue."

Oh, but he was heavy in her arms—heavy, heavy as he leaned on her. "Jorge Manuel!" she screamed. . . . And, "Jorge Manuel!"

NOTES FOR THOSE WHO CARE

THE original Greek name, *Domenicos Theotocopoulos* changed in Italy to *Domenico Theotocopuli,* called *Il Greco,* and in Spain to *Dominico Theotocopuli,* called *El Greco, El Greigo, Dominico Greco,* and variously misspelled.

Theotocopoulos is variously interpreted as "little son of God" or "bird begot of God."

CRETE:

The only trace of the family name in Crete consists of the seal of one Manuel of the family of Theotocos, but El Greco was known to his contemporaries as a Cretan or Candian, which might have meant the island, or the city which is its capital. A record of the Spanish Inquisition (1582) states that El Greco was a native of the city of Candia. The document is unsigned and, as every traveller knows, when one is far from home the largest city of the vicinity becomes "his residence," the evidence is not conclusive. It seemed preferable to give this broader picture of Crete, and this more vital picture of El Greco.

The date of El Greco's birth is unknown. It has been set as early as 1537, and as late as 1550, but was probably about 1545.

The assumption that El Greco intended to become a monk is based on the facts that his work shows early training as an icon painter, and that the trade was permitted by the Greek Church of the sixteenth century only to monks and priests.

VENICE (1560):

Two dates have been changed to concentrate the scene.
L'Aretino died in 1550.
The decree referred to on p. 27 was passed in 1566.

BASSANO:

It has long been believed that El Greco worked with Bassano. The evidence is in the paintings, particularly in the fact that there was a different character to Bassano's work done between 1562 and 1570 from any work which left his studio before or after, and the two end periods resemble each other, whereas the middle period is closely related to the work of El Greco.

Pictures specifically referred to are:

P. 44.—Titian: "Sacred and Profane Love." Borghese Gallery, Rome.

P. 45.—Titian: "Gloria." Prado Museum, Madrid.

P. 45.—Jacopo da Ponte (Bassano). "Descent from the Cross." Louvre, Paris.

P. 51.—Jacopo da Ponte: "St. Jerome." Royal Palace, Venice. (It was more than rare for Bassano to sign and date.)

P. 55.—Drawing No. 13953, Uffizi Collection, Florence, called a Bassano, but attributed by Willumsen to El Greco.

IN TITIAN'S HOUSE:

It is an open question whether El Greco ever actually worked in Titian's studio. The written evidence is in Clovio's letter (p. 131), but its word "student" might mean either apprentice or one who studied the master's work, as anyone may do today. The present interpretation is based on the fact that El Greco left Venice imbued with Tintoretto's manner, but that the personal influence of Titian followed him throughout his life.

Pp. 68-119.—The battle of Lepanto is dated over a year

ahead, in order to replace some smaller event in the long artistic battle between Titian and Tintoretto, with the actual crisis.

P. 77.—Gerolamo Dante, referred to by Vasari as "Titian's Gerolamo."

P. 116.—The letter has no date, nor is there any indication of the place from which it was written. It was found by Herko Fabkowic in the Municipal Library of Spalato, and is written in old Croat. (Published in French by Willumsen.)

P. 126.—Irene's letter is based on a contemporaneous letter written by the widow of Correggio, a notoriously virtuous woman, to L'Aretino, a notorious libertine.

Clovio's friendship with El Greco may, or may not, have begun in Venice. He was in Rome during El Greco's stay there; the second operation on his eyes took place in Rome; and the letter, quoted p. 131, was written in Rome. The distortion is made to concentrate the story. The altered parts of the letter, faithfully translated, would read:

"*November* 16, 1570

"*There has arrived in Rome* a young Candian . . . has astonished all of the painters *here in Rome.*"

This constitutes the first document which has been found on the life of El Greco.

P. 140.—Irene may have died a little earlier, but in the two or three lines which Vasari gives her, he is vague about the date of her death.

Further evidence is in a curious Van Dyck etching called "Titian and His Mistress," showing Titian, a man of ninety, with a young woman who leans on an effigy of death.

Pictures specifically referred to are,

P. 62.—Titian, self-portrait of 1550. Emperor Frederick Museum, Berlin.

P. 62.—Bassano, "Clearing of the Temple," London.

P. 66.—Titian, "Pieta," Academy, Venice.

P. 88 *et seq.*—Titian, "Spain Aiding Religion," Prado Museum, Madrid.

P. 128 *et seq.*—El Greco, "Portrait of Don Julio Clovio," Museum, Naples.

ROME:

The Roman episode is documented by a manuscript of Giulio Cæsar Mancini in the Vatican Collection. (Cod. Vat. Barb, lat. 4.315.) It was written shortly after El Greco's death and is published by Willumsen.

It is interesting to note the early recognition of El Greco's technical skill; and that the Greco canvases attributed by his contemporaries to Titian were subsequently attributed to Tintoretto, in spite of El Greco's signature.

P. 138.—El Greco, "Purification of the Temple," Yarborough Collection, London. "Myself," according to some authorities, including Cossio; "Rafael," according to others, including Willumsen.

P. 142.—El Greco's letter is a personal interpretation.

P. 146, l. 23, Emperor Charles V.; l. 24, Philip II, who had not yet outlived his fourth wife.

P. 147.—The date of El Greco's departure from Rome is based on the Mancini manuscript, which speaks of him as having painted there during the papacy of Pius V, which ended in 1572.

TOLEDO:

In this section there is no distortion of fact, but the interpretation and interrelating are done here for the first time.

Spanish terms often left untranslated, but translated here, are: blood cleanliness, or purity of blood—*limpieza, limpios;* inspection of ships—*visitas de navios;* keep friend—*pie de amigo;* penitential cloak—*san benito;* pleasure garden—*cigarrales;* Moors—*Moriscos;* Jews, *Maranos.*

P. 153, l. 1, A sophism currently accepted a century later. By the document in which El Greco authorized his son to make his will, *Gerónima de las Cuebas* is known to be the mother of that son, born a year after El Greco went to Toledo. She was with El Greco at the time of his death. There was no marriage. That is all that is known of her, except two portraits, supposed to be of her. The same face is painted in several compositions.

The first portrait, wrongly known as *The Daughter of El Greco* or *The Lady in Ermine* (Stirling Maxwell Collection, London), shows her as a girl of about twenty. The second portrait, reproduced here, known as "The Princess of Eboli," was painted about twenty-five years later. The identification, made by Bertaux, is almost positive, and the comparison of the two pictures tells a striking story. (*Note.*—Contrary to legend and an early naming of the first portrait, El Greco had no daughter.)

To fill in the outline, I turned to the greatest and most characteristic Spanish woman of the time, or of all time, and have based Gerónima's youth on that of Sta. Teresa.

Moreover, this work contains several quotations and adaptations from the writing of Sta. Teresa.

P. 164.—The museum called the *Casa Del Greco,* is the nearest existent approach to the house in which he lived from at least 1585 until his death. The actual house, which belonged to the Marquis de Villena, with its twenty-four rooms, some described as regal, its patios and gardens, occupied the entire area which is now the public Paseo del Transito.

P. 165.—The picture seen through the window is the "Trinity" of the Prado Museum, Madrid.

P. 170.—"The Assumption of the Virgin." Museum of Fine Arts, Chicago.

P. 170.—Pacheco refers to El Greco's writing, all of which is lost.

P. 171.—In Spanish there are two forms of the word "honour," one referring to the internal concept, the other to the external one of respect. As Sta. Teresa used the latter form, doubtless Gerónima did.

P. 172 *et seq.*—*That El Greco was held by the Inquisition from about* 1572 *is a* personal assumption. Willumsen believes that El Greco spent these years as a draughtsman in Herrara's office at the Escorial. His evidence is slight, and it may be assumed that if El Greco had been at the Escorial he would have known Philip II, and his painting of San Mauricio would have been different (pp. 221, 274). I know of no other conjecture which has been made, and neither Willumsen nor any other has offered any *solution for the following questions:*

It Is Not Known Where El Greco Spent His First Years in Spain, but a man could be lost from sight in a cell of the Inquisition. Moreover, there are the facts of the inspection of ships for heresy; that Greek Catholics were heretics under the Inquisition. While everything tends to show that El Greco began life as a Greek Catholic, his authorization to make his will states that he died a Roman Catholic and the time and place of the conversion remain unknown.

It Is Not Known Why El Greco Did Not Marry the woman with whom he spent his entire life in Spain and who was the mother of his loved son, but the loss of purity of blood (*limpieza*) would have made marriage with him undesirable.

It Is Not Known Why He Refused to Tell When Asked in court why he came to Toledo, since the time and reason for his coming seem to have been well known; but contact with the Inquisition was considered such a disgrace, that a man might well refuse to answer any question which would open up that past.

Moreover, there is the quality in El Greco's painting which suggests an experience in the prisons of the Inquisition.

P. 165.—The Eli, Eli may or may not have originated among the Spanish Jews. "The age and time of composition of Jewish melodies vary considerably, and cannot always be accurately ascertained," but the air shows strong influence of synagogue worship, and after the fifteenth century popular airs were so generally adopted, that "where the later synagogual music maintains a modal difference from the music of the street outside, it is only the utilization of material dating from before the fateful fifteenth century, when the expulsion from Spain set a seal upon the Peninsular tradition of the Sephardim, and the labors of Jacob ben Moses Möeln of Mayence (1365-1427) and his disciples gave final redaction to the use of Ashkenazim; or where the officient or his teachers were residents of eastern Europe under the influence of Slavonic or Gypsy passion in melody, or in Moslem lands."

The translation of the song begins:

> My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?
> With fire and flame they have burnt us.

The line beginning "My God," alone is sung in Hebrew. It is taken from Psalm 22; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

P. 188.—Document: Jorge Manuel was not born in Toledo.

P. 193.—Juan Preboste is known to have been El Greco's servant up to the time of El Greco's death, often empowered to collect money for him and to work on his canvases. No more is known. Here he is given the character of Hernando Diaz, sentenced in the Toledo *auto de fé* of 1562.

P. 230.—The Illescas tombs, now lost.

P. 245.—As Guevara was inquisitor-general only from 1599 to 1602, the portrait was probably painted under these circumstances.

P. 253.—Cossio identifies these as the Prado canvases. They were finished between the 20 and 23 October, 1600.

P. 258.—The attachment of the founder's goods was withdrawn June 22, 1599. Therefore, the action may have been influenced by the *auto de fé* of the year before. It was preferable to deal with only the one.

P. 260.—The actual papers of this suit have not been found, but it was cited and upheld in a similar suit a century later.

P. 262.—The Palace and Cigarral of Buena Vista were so disfigured in the nineteenth century, that nothing remains which can be attributed to El Greco.

P. 265.—Alfonsa may be the Virgin of the "Holy Family" of the Madraza collection (El Greco is the Joseph); the central figure in the Family painting (Cossio, plate 112), and the "Lady of the Flower," Stirling Maxwell collection.

P. 267.—Jorge Manuel was guardian to a Manuel de los Cuebas.

P. 270.—Whereas it was customary for a child to be given the surnames of *both* parents, biographers usually seek a cause for a dropping of the father's name.

P. 273.—The generosity of the king is based on a similar episode with Zuccaro.

P. 275 *et seq.*; p. 287 *et seq.*—Little is known of the life of Góngora, and practically nothing of the years covered here. The inference of friendship with El Greco is based on Góngora's sonnet to El Greco and on the analogous relationship of the modern schools of literature and art.

In 1610 Góngora wrote his *Panegyrico al Duque de Lerma* who later became his patron and secured him a non-remunerative position as honourary chaplain to Philip III.

Paravicino's relationship to Góngora is well known. His relationship to El Greco is based on Paravicino's sonnets to El Greco, and El Greco's portraits of Paravicino.

P. 283.—This, and the inscription on the St. Paul, p. 295, are the only writings of El Greco, outside of legal documents, that exist.

P. 284.—Canvas generally called the Dream of Philip II, Escorial.

P. 291.—No one knows the end of the Illescas suit.

P. 294.—The Vision of the Apocalypse, of the Zuloaga collection, generally called "Profane Love," but identified as the canvas given this other name in the inventory which follows these notes.

P. 303.—El Greco died April 7, 1614. Jorge Manuel worked on this "Baptism" until 1630, when it was given to Ulloa to finish. This was done in 1634. Nothing more is known of Ulloa.

To End: El Greco was elaborately buried according to his wish, in the Church of San Domingo el Antiguo. Then, in 1618, a quarrel broke out between Jorge Manuel and the Church of San Domingo, about an altar Jorge Manuel had contracted to make for it and had not been able to do; and since there were also debts from the funeral, the Government gave the Church permission to dispose freely of the altar and vault. as though there had been no contract. Jorge Manuel was ordered to remove the bones of his father. He then did some architectural work for the Church of San Torcuato, in payment for which he was given a vault for the burial of his descendants and his parents. But the church fell and, in the rebuilt one, only the door is left (which Cossio hopefully says was probably the part designed by Jorge Manuel). Thus, nothing dead remains.

There Remain Two Modern Legends to be put in place:

One, started by a Spanish oculist, that El Greco was astigmatic, and that with proper glasses he would have painted like anybody else. Anyone who looks at the portraits knows that the man who painted them did not distort his figures unintentionally.

The Other Legend, untenable but interesting, is that El Greco was a Jew. It is based on the fact that he lived in the old Jewish quarter, and that, according to the pamphlet "El Tizón," by Cardinal Mendoza y Bondilla, in the time of Philip II there were no families in Spain who were not tainted with Moorish or Jewish blood. The obvious answers are that the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, and surely no Jew would have entered when El Greco did; and the book, "El Tizón," would not apply to him, as he was from Crete. But the legend is interesting in that it points to a parallel between him and the modern Jew, members of old, defeated Oriental races, of religions called heretical, astonishing travellers, but foreigners everywhere. The situation is met with arrogance, ambition, the necessity to become a power, the desire for money and ostentation to prove the power, and with the development of a keen intellect, to a great extent unprejudiced by nationality.

El Greco, on his death bed, gave his son power to draw up his will and dispose of his goods. Thus we know that besides debts to many named and unnamed people—ending with "Maria Gómez served (him) twenty years, and if anything is owing to her, she will be paid out of his goods." El Greco left:

INVENTORY OF THE GOODS OF EL GRECO

(Protocol of Juan Sánchez de Soria.)

INVENTORY OF DOMINICO GRECO.

IN the city of Toledo on the twelfth of April, one thousand six hundred and fourteen, appeared before Francisco Langayo de Castro, magistrate of this city, Jorge Manuel teotocopuli, resident of Toledo, and said that on the death of dominico teotocopuli, his father, certain goods have been left, and it was his right to make a legal inventory of them so that the goods he left might be on record. He begs the aforesaid magistrate to give him permission to do this, and to approve it when it is done. The aforesaid magistrate ordered him to proceed with the aforesaid inventory and the aforesaid Jorge Manuel made a list of the following goods:

(*In the handwriting of Jorge Manuel*)

First, A canopy of Crimson damask, With its spread and footrest.
A walnut half bed (single bed)
A cot

four mattresses
four sheets
four pillows
Two comforters
A spread
Two table cloths
eight napkins
four shirts
Three towels
Two pair of linen stockings
four pair of slippers
A large pine Chest With Five drawers
A leather-lined desk
Two pine writing tables
A walnut table with chains
Another pine table
Another pine writing table with a drawer
A large wooden cupboard
a canvas cupboard
an old sideboard
eight chairs
a rhyme table
four water-jars
two coffers
a brazier
A warming pan
Two saucepans
two skillets

two spits
One small axe
One chest
One cloak of heavy cloth
Another of cashmere
One gown of silk serge
One hat
Some hose
A sword and a dagger with scabbards and sword-belt
Three painter's benches
Three ladders
Two stools
A table with a drawer
A porphyry slab for grinding colours
Two mullers
An oil-lamp
Two candle-sticks
A mortar

PICTURES

A small St. Maurice
A small St. John the Evangelist seeing the mysteries of the Apocalypse
A small Incarnation
A small Nativity
A small St. Francis with a Christ
a small Christ carrying the cross

a small Virgin with the sleeping child
a miniature Virgin and child
a small Incarnation with Heaven above
a small oval Crowning of the Virgin
an Agony in the Garden
a small St. Andrew
a small St. Francis with the skull
a small St. Sebastian
a St. Hyacinth
a small Crucifixion
an Agony in the Garden
a Virgin with the child and St. Agnes and St. Martha
a St. Dominic with the cross in his hand
a small St. Hieronymus, Cardinal
a Crowning of the Virgin
a small Mary Magdalene
A Virgin with sleeping child and St. Joseph and St. Anna and St. John the Baptist
a small Incarnation
a small Virgin of Charity
a small despoliation of Christ
a small St. Francis in ecstasy
a small Incarnation
a small Mary Magdalene with a Christ
a small St. John the Evangelist and St. Francis
a very small Nativity
a small St. Francis

a small St. Francis with a companion behind
a miniature Virgin with sleeping child
A cleansing of the Temple
a miniature Nativity of Our Lady
a miniature St. Francis in ecstasy
a miniature St. Dominic
a small Virgin of the Milk
a small head of the Saviour
a miniature Incarnation
a small Nativity
a small St. Paul weeping
a St. Ildephonse writing
a St. Peter standing, unfinished
a Virgin with child and St. Joseph and St. Anne, unfinished
a St. Ildephonse, standing, unfinished
a small circular St. Judas
a Virgin of the Conception, unfinished
a Mary Magdalene
a St. Francis with a cloth
A cleansing of the Temple
a large St. Maurice
a Toledo landscape
a St. Martin
a Resurrection
a Crucifixion
a St. Veronica with angels, to finish
a Crowning of the Virgin, to finish

a St. John the Baptist and Evangelist
a Nativity
a St. Hieronymus, Cardinal
a St. Paul
a large St. Sebastian
a large Nativity
a St. Peter and St. Paul
a half length portrait of St. John the Baptist
a canvas of three saints
a head of Christ
a St. Dominic
a half length portrait of St. John the Evangelist
a half length portrait of St. Paul
a half length portrait of St. Matthew
a half length portrait of St. Simon
a Crucifixion with St. John and Mary
an Angel Gabriel giving the message to Zacharias
miniatures of the two St. Johns with St. James
a miniature of the cleansing of the Temple
a Christ carrying the cross
a small Resurrection
a small visitation of the Holy Ghost
a Crucifixion with St. John and Mary and angels
a small Nativity
a small Baptism
a small Angel Gabriel
a small Christ and Mary
a small circular Nativity

a small St. Augustine
a large St. John the Baptist
an Agony in the Garden
a large St. Hyacinth
a St. Veronica
a head of the Saviour
a head of an Apostle
a head of an Apostle
Twelve heads of apostles with their Christ
two landscapes of Toledo
a St. Francis with the skull
a Crucifixion
a St. John the Evangelist with St. Francis
a St. Peter weeping
a Nativity
a St. Maurice
a small Laocoön
a small Laocoön
a cleansing of the Temple
a large Laocoön
the pictures for the Hospital, begun
the side altar pieces in wood, without the carving or the sculpture
the principal reredos, without the large columns, nor the cornice, nor carving, nor sculpture
a twisted column
two canvases prepared for the decoration of the side altar pieces

fifteen pictures sketched in
twenty plaster models
thirty models of clay and wax
two hundred engravings
one hundred and fifty drawings
thirty sketches
twenty-eight stretchers for painting
two prepared canvases
a picture of Our Lady and Joseph and St. Isabel, begun
a large St. Francis, begun

LIST OF GREEK BOOKS

Josephus, Wars of the Jews
Lexicon
Xenophon
Synod of Trent
Demosthenes
Isocrates
Homer
St. Justin the Martyr
St. Dionysius
Aristotle's Politica
Old and New Testament, in 5 tomes
Aristotle's Physica
Lucian in two tomes
Plutarch's Lives
Plutarch's Moral Philosophy

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles
Aesop's Fables
St. John Chrysostom, Orisons
Euripides
Aristotle's Politica
St. Basil, Homilies
Philoponos, the books of the Spirit
St. Basil, Ethical Orisons
Hippocrates
St. Dionysius, On the Celestial Hierarchy
Artemidorus
Arrian on Alexander's Expedition

ITALIAN BOOKS

John Franco Milanese
Petrarch
Description of Italy
History of Italy
Bernardo Tasso: *L'Armadigi*
Ariosto
Quintus Curtius, Deeds of Alexander
Vocabulary and Grammar of Albert Acarizio
Treatise on the art of painting
Moral Philosophy
Botero's Universal Relation
System to preserve the health
Boetius Severino
Defence of Captain Francesco Piniero

Camilo Agrippa
Ten dialogues of Francesco Patrizi
Military Discipline
Fifty other Italian books
Seventeen other books in Romance (languages)
Nineteen books on Architecture
A vial of Nut Oil
a little varnish
A vial of flesh-colour varnish
Ten engraved copper plates
Some colours
a large Baptism to finish
four pictures in chiaroscuro.

Scrivinger's Note Following the inventory of El Greco's Goods.

(*In the Notary's handwriting*)

In the city of Toledo on the seventh day of July, one thousand six hundred and fourteen, there appeared before Francisco Langayo de Castro, magistrate of Toledo, Jorge Manuel teotocopuli, inhabitant of this city, and presented this inventory which he had drawn up of the goods and property which remained on the death of dominico greco, his father, and he swears by God and the Cross in legal form that he has made the said inventory truly and in good faith, without any concealment, and whenever notice comes to him of any

other property of the abovesaid he will make it known and put it in the inventory, and he asked for it as testimony. The magistrate accepted the abovesaid inventory, and ordered copies of it to be given to those whom it concerned. He issued a decree to this effect, and signed it, with the following witnesses: Rodrigo de Hoz y Andres Vazquez, inhabitants of Toledo. Francisco Langayo, Magistrate. Jorge Manuel Theotocopuli.

Before me: Juan de Soria—I made no charge for this.

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